PEACE MAKER 鐵 1

Nanae Chrono Presents

クロガネ

黒乃奈々絵

PEACE MAKER 鐵

IKUROGANE

Peace Maker Kurogane 1

Created by NANAE CHRONO

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PEACE MAKER鐵
KUROGANE

Volume 1

by Nanae Chrono

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始一刀龍再

A STRANGER...
OHHHH SAAAYYY CAAANNN... ♫
...HAS COME TO...
YOOOOU SEEE ... ♫
... KYOTO.

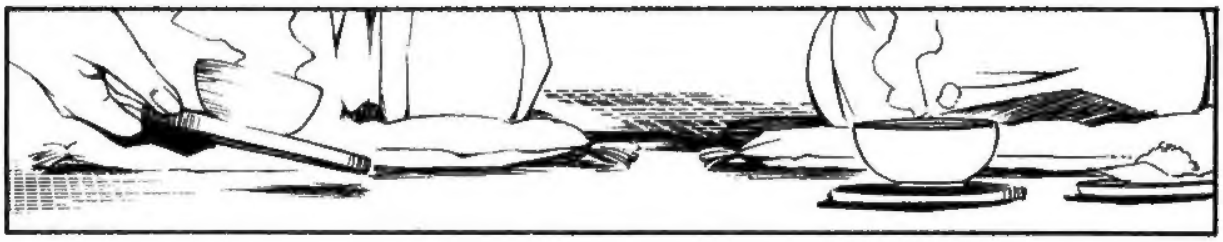
Act 1

Beginning

GOOD WORK AT IKEDAYA.
SHINSENGUMI COMPOUND
IT'S SAID THAT YOU FOUGHT LIKE DEMONS INCAR-NATE.
NO, NO. WE ONLY DID WHAT WE HAD TO...
...WHAT OUR DUTY REQUIRED.
ON BEHALF OF ALL KONDOU, I THANK YOU.
YOUR PRAISE HUMBLES ME.

THAT REMINDS ME!
BLUUU
USH
...
!
EXCUSE ME.
YET HERE HE IS NOW.
HE'S NOT IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO DESERVE YOUR NOTICE, HIRAI-DONO.
Ha ha!
WE HAVE YET TO MEET YOUR YOUNG PAGE! I WOULD SO LIKE TO SEE THE LAD.
MAY I INTRO-DUCE...

I AM HONORED TO MEET YOU.
MY NAME IS ICHI-MURA.
...MY PAGE, ICHIMURA TETSUNO-SUKE.



?
I MUST SAY, I'M ASTON-ISHED.
THE PLEASURE IS MINE, TRULY!
...

...LOOKING AT YOU NOW, THEY COULDN'T BE MORE WRONG.
F-FATHER!
?
I'VE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT YOU TWO, AND...
WE'D ALSO HEARD THAT ICHIMURA-DONO WAS A "LOOSE CANNON SHOT AWAY FROM THE ENEMY" OR A "STRAY PUP IN MEN'S CLOTHING." BUT HE IS SO POISED!
NO, THEY ARE TRUE.
I STILL HAVE MUCH TO LEARN.
TRULY, IT IS AS THEY SAY.
Ha ha ha!
WE HAD HEARD, HIJIKATA-DONO, THAT YOU ARE SOME SORT OF WILD-HAIRED GANGSTER WITH THE ICY HEART OF A DEMON.
Pbbt!
ONE MUSTN'T EVER TRUST IN GOSSIP, I SUPPOSE!
F-FATHER! PLEASE...!

HMPH.
ふはぁー
JEEZ!
I'M REALLY OVER THAT "GANGSTER" RUMOR. WELL, AT LEAST HE WAS POLITE ABOUT IT.
LOVES TO HEAR HIMSELF TALK, THOUGH, RIGHT, YAMAZAKI-KUN?
HMM ...

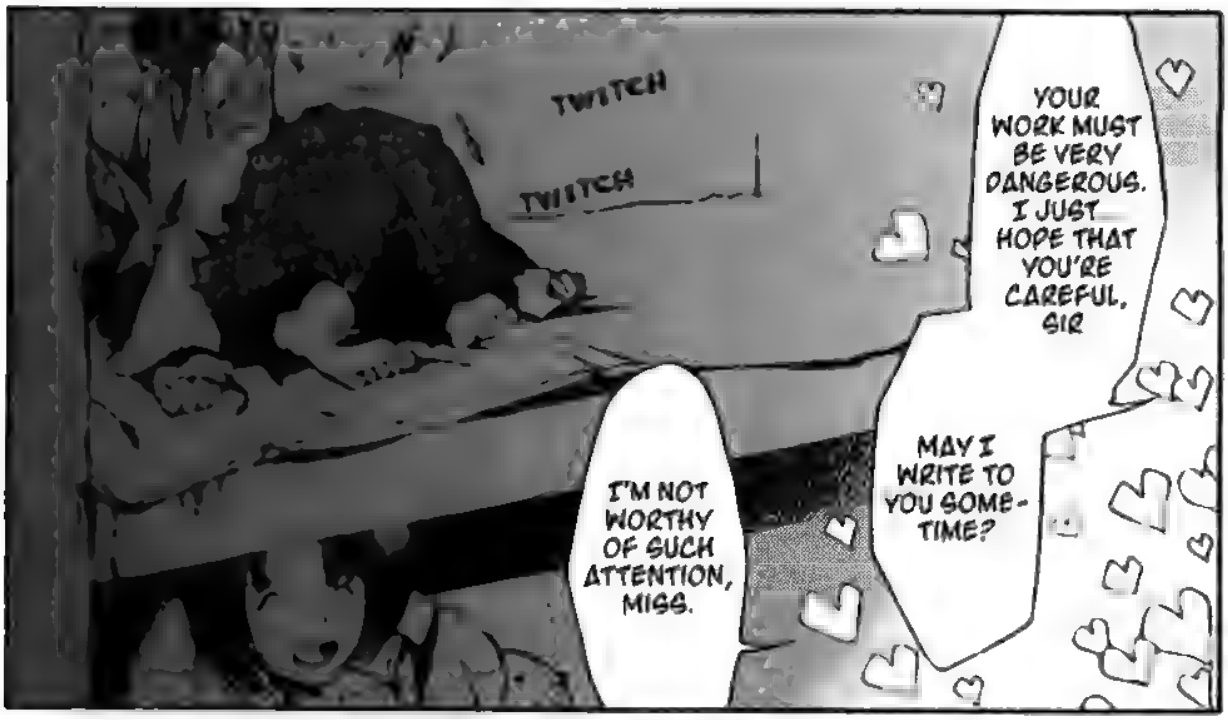
WHUM
THUD
STILL... NICE JOB ON THE WIG.
I USED ANIMAL HAIR, NOT HUMAN HAIR. SOFTER.
Professional.
AS BAD AS THE RUMORS ARE ABOUT YOU, VICE COMMANDER...
...THEY REALLY HAD ICHIMURA PEGGED.
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
....

HA HA HA HA HA HA!
THIS IS HILARIOUS!
WHAT THE HELL WAS I TIED UP IN THERE FOR?!
I HEARD YOU! YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT ME!
WHAT? DON'T YOU THINK I DID A GOOD JOB WITH IT?
AND TAKE THAT OFF, WILL YOU?!
My tummy hurts!!
QUIET!
AND THOSE RUMORS WERE RIGHT ON THE MONEY, RIGHT, HIJIKATA-SAN?!

GOOD JOB WATCHING THE PUPPY FOR US, TOO.
FLINCH
I DID THE BEST I COULD!
SERIOUSLY THOUGH, YOUR DISGUISE WAS PERFECT. ♡
Hoo. That was so funny.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
IT WAS ALL INSTINCT.
SO!!
WHAT AM I DOING WRONG NOW?!
I'M TALLER! AND MY LOOKS ARE MORE MANLY AND DIGNIFIED!
SHOOP
I'VE LEARNED PROPER MANNERS AND ETIQUETTE, AND I'M MUCH CALMER! MUCH!!
FUMPF
I CAN MAKE GOOD TEA, AND I CAN SERVE IT WITHOUT SPILLING IT.
...

KNOCK IT OFF!!
WHAT'S THAT ABOUT "MANLY AND DIGNIFIED"?
THAT LOOKS LIKE FUN, YAMAZAKI-SAN! ♡
HIJIKATA-SAMA?!
EXCUSE ME!
IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG ...
...MISS?

I'M SORRY THAT WAS RUDE OF ME!
UM ...
I
BLUSH


TWITCH
TWITCH
YOUR WORK MUST BE VERY DANGEROUS. I JUST HOPE THAT YOU'RE CAREFUL, SIR
MAY I WRITE TO YOU SOME-TIME?
I'M NOT WORTHY OF SUCH ATTENTION, MISS.

SQUDINK

AM I THAT BAD?!
AM I NOT CUT OUT TO BE THE VICE COMMANDER'S PAGE?
NOT TODAY, YOU'RE NOT.
WHATEVER.
TATSUNII IS GETTING OLD...
A MAN OVER 30 CONTAINS MULTITUDES.
I FEEL LIKE I'M ONLY LEARNING THE BAD PARTS OF ADULTHOOD.
DON'T SAY THAT, TETSU.

YOU KNOW... SINCE THAT DAY.
...YOU HAVE GROWN. IN MANY WAYS.
...YOU MAY COMPLAIN, BUT THE TRUTH IS...
REGARDLESS...
ARE YOU STILL ANGRY?
TATSU-NII?
YES?

WELL ...
I'LL BE BACK. GOTTA PEE.
DO YOU THINK I'M STILL ANGRY?
THREE MONTHS HAVE COME AND GONE SINCE THAT DAY.
EVER SINCE THE IKEDAYA INCIDENT.
OH YEAH. HE'S STILL ANGRY.

CHOUSHUU WAS ANNIHILATED!
A GREAT MANY WARRIORS DIED IN THAT BATTLE.
AND FOR BETTER OR WORSE...
ON JUNE 18TH, THE CHOUSHUU REBELS SENT TROOPS INTO KYOTO TO AVENGE THE MASSACRE AT IKEDAYA.
THEY WERE MET AT THE HAMAGURI GATE OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE BY THE TROOPS OF THE HAKUFU, THE SATSUMA, AND OTHERS. THE SHINSENGUMI WERE THERE AS WELL.

...I SEARCHED THE MOUNTAIN OF DEAD BODIES...

...YET I COULD FIND NO TRACE OF HIM.

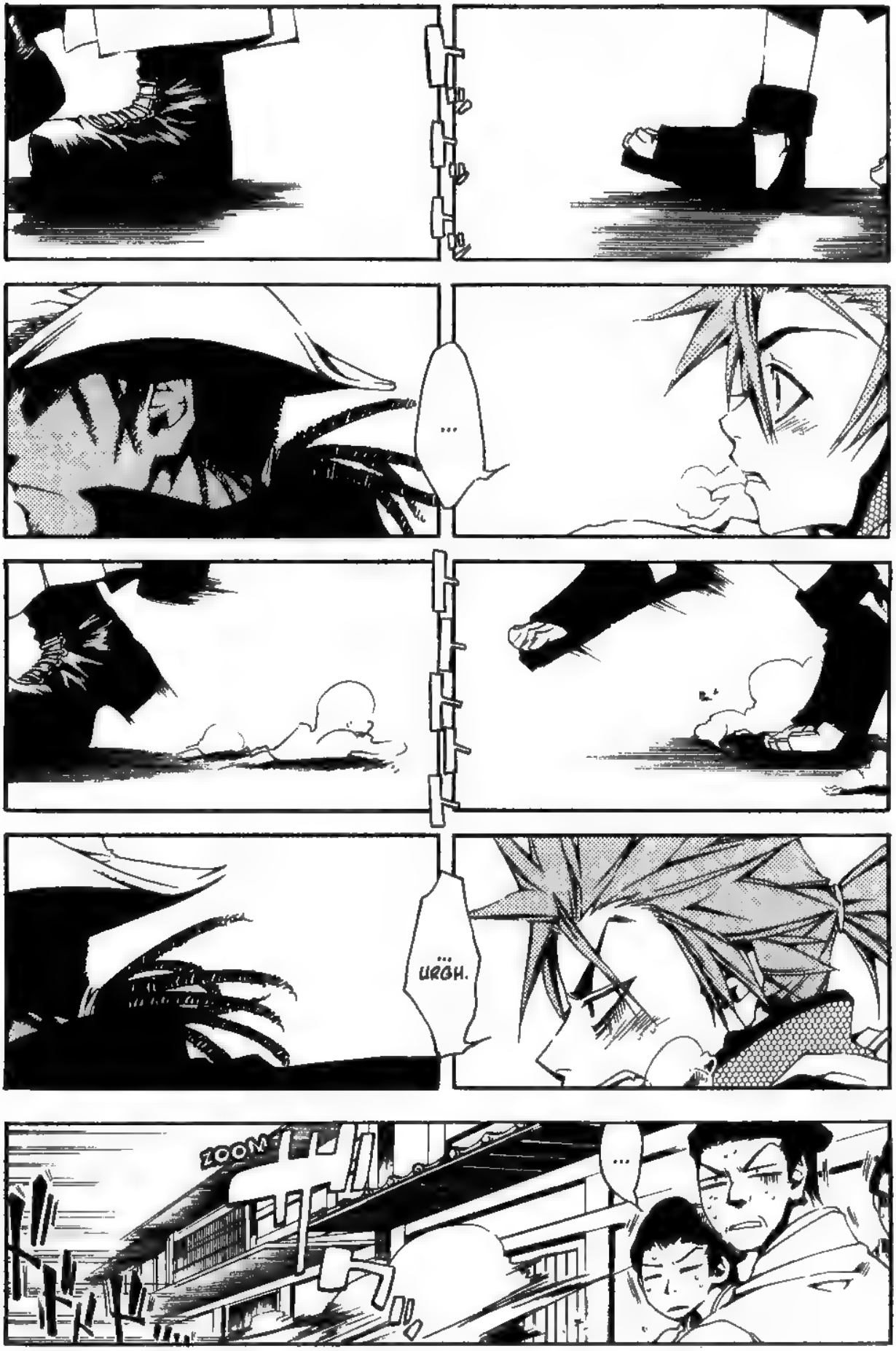
...CAN YOU SEEEE... ♫
... BY THE DAAA-AAWN'S ...
WHAT SO PROO-OUDLY ...
...EARLY LIGHT... ♫
...WE HAILED AT THE TWILIGHT'S LAST... ♫

...
PERILOUS
FIGHT...
♫

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
O'ER THE RAAAA-MMMM...
...
PAAAA-RRRR-TTT-SSSS...
...
EXCUSE ME, SIR?
I KNEW IT!
HE DIDN'T PAY!
COME BACK HERE, YOU!
UHM... TETSU ...?

...
TETSU
...

BUSTLE
BUSTLE
BUSTLE
BUSTLE


...
...
URGH.
ZOOM
...

WHA...?!
WHAT'S WITH THIS GUY?!
SHUFF

HUFF...
HUFF...
...
HE... HE STOPPED...
Huff.
Huff...
WELL, WELL.
YOU'RE TENACIOUS, HUH?
AND YOU'RE FAST.
Huff...
Huff...
I JUST WANTED...

ズラー
...TO ASK YOU SOME-THING.
HUFF...
WHEEZE...
THAT'S PRETTY LOW, TAKING A KID AS A HOS-TAGE.
WHAT? WHAT'S THIS BRAT DOING HERE?!
?!
?!
...WHO ARE YOU GUYS?
AND...

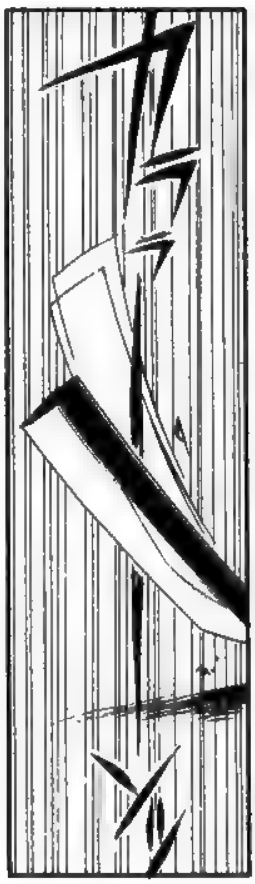
HOOOO...
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?! JUST GET HIM!!
HEY, I--
I'M NOT WITH THIS GUY! SERI-OUSLY!!!
WAIT!
...THESE SWORDS ON MY BACK AREN'T JUST FOR SHOW.
LET ME SHOW YOU...
...
TOYS.
HAND THEM OVER.
YO, BOY!
"YOU TRY AND DRAW THOSE SWORDS..."
THESE AREN'T ...
"...AND I'LL TAKE THEM AWAY FROM YOU."

MY HAT.
HOLD ON TO IT FOR ME, WOULD YA?
HE RAN OFF THAT WAY.
OH, THAT BOY.

"I THINK YOU HAVE GROWN..."
NO!
NOT AT ALL!!
YOU'RE STILL A CHILD!!
I'M TELLING THE VICE COMMANDER ABOUT THIS! HE'LL PUNISH YOU FOR SURE!
*can't do it himself...
!!
...

REAADY?
GO!!

NICE CATCH, KID.



faaaaa.
...GETS IT BETWEEN THE EYES.
...
...GRK!
?!
GYAAARGH?!
Haya!!
CRUNCH!
SO, NEXT ONE WHO LAYS A FINGER ON HIM...
THAT KID'S MY BUDDY NOW.

WHO ARE THOSE GUYS?!
AND YOU--- WHO ARE YOU?
Good, good!
COULD BE ANY NUMBER OF FOLKS, BUT I CAN'T SAY FOR SURE.
HEY!!
YOU ALL RIGHT?
SO, YOU'RE A WANTED MAN?
THAT'S A FINE THING TO SAY TO THE GUY WHO JUST SAVED YOUR BUTT.
HUFF ...
HUFF ...
SMITH & WESSON
HUFF ...
HUFF ...

!!

DIE!!

COULDN'T TELL BY LOOKING AT 'EM...
...BUT BULLETS ARE EXPENSIVE.
SO, TO CUT BACK ON EXPENSES...
...I'M GONNA HAVE TO DO THIS SAMURAI STYLE.
HFF...
HFF...
HUH?

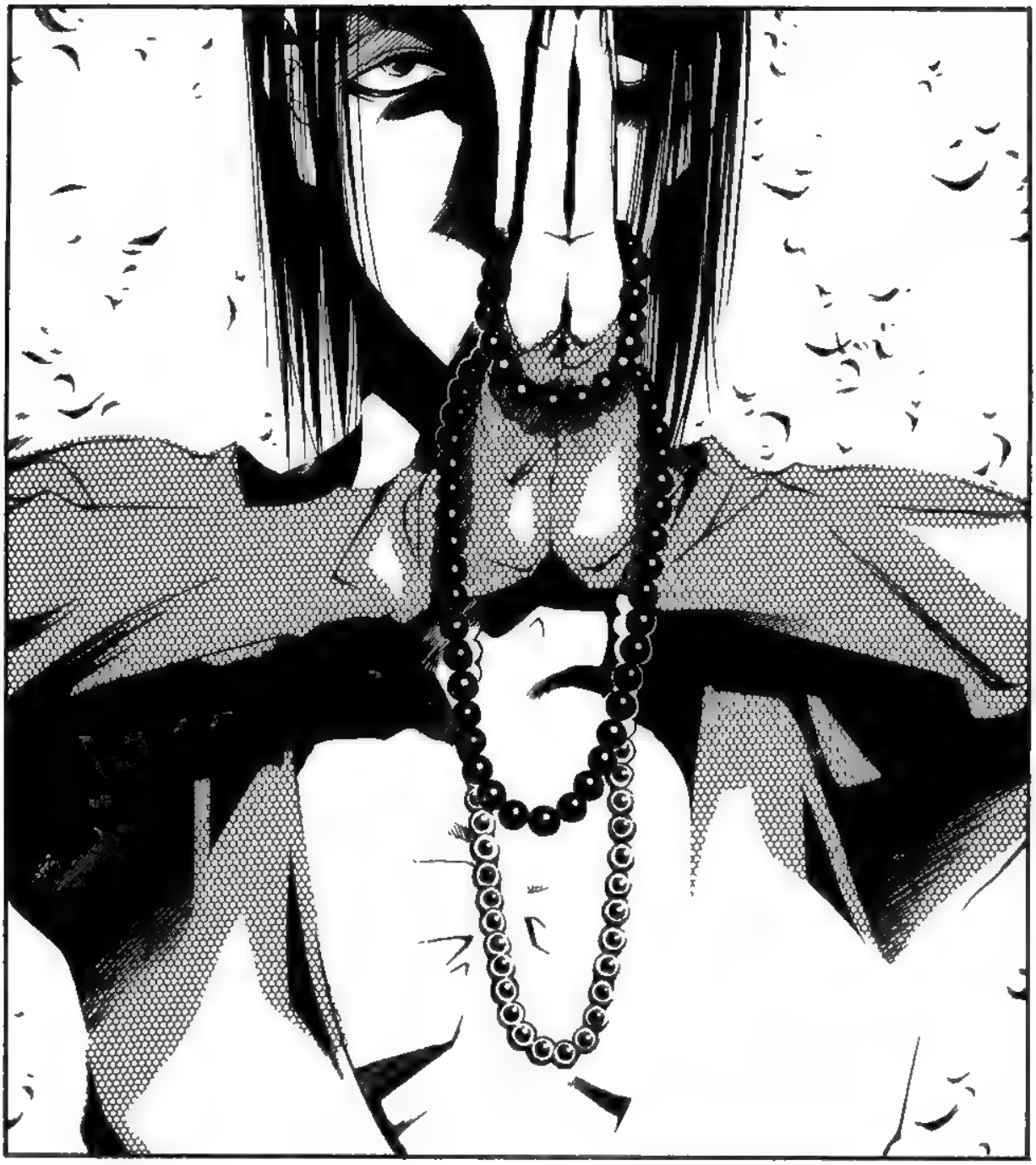
ARE YOU READY?
AH.
HERE'S YOUR HAT.
BEEN STOMPED ON PLENTY.
YOU REALLY SUR-PRISED ME BACK THERE!

UHM...
YOU A SWORD MAKER'S SON?
YOU AIN'T TOO BAD WITH THOSE SWORDS.
NO, NO!
BESIDES, I WANNA ASK YOU SOME-THING.
I'LL TELL YOU WHO I AM, IF YOU TELL ME WHO YOU ARE.
Sexy man, comin through!
OKAY, OKAY, I LIED.
REALLY? THEN MINE'S A SECRET, TOO.
...
IT'S A SECRET!
THE LESS YOU KNOW ABOUT ME...
...THE SAFER YOU ARE.

SO AWESOMELY COOL!!!
あっ
SO COOL!
ぽん
...
どどどどどどど
...
I'M SORRY, TATSU-NII-SAMA! I'M SORRY!!!
SORRY WON'T CUT IT.

YOU WILL BE!
I'M SOOORRY !!!
...
SHUT UP! WE'RE GOING HOME!
I'LL PAY YOU BACK, TATSU-NII...
...eventually...
...

PEACE MAKER...



第二話 Act 2 One

はじめ

...KILL YOU...
HUFF...
HUFF...
...KILL YOU...
HUFF...

...KILL YOU...
HUFF...
HUFF...
KILL YOU.
HUFF!
HAAA...

SNDORGH
SNAAARFGH
...
...
...
SHIT.

RIGHT!! TODAY WILL BE AN ALL-DAY PRACTICE SESSION! HAVEN'T DONE THAT IN A WHILE!
I WONDER IF OKITA'S GOT TIME TO SPAR WITH ME TODAY?
S@WEEE!
OH?
Squee squee squee!!

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, BUT I WAS WONDERING IF YOU WOULD TRAIN--
SHOOM
GLAD I FOUND YOU, OKITA-SAN!
SAIZO...
VOOOOOSH

FLLT
FLLT
WHAT THE...?!

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

THIS ISN'T A SPARRING MATCH... OKITA-SAN'S COMPLETELY FOCUSED...
THEY MEAN BUSINESS...TO THE DEATH...
V--
VICE COMMANDER--
IS HE A CHOU-SHUU?!
WHY IS HE DRAWING HIS BLADE IN OUR COMPOUND?

WHA ...?
IT'S GOOD TO GET THIS SERIOUS... EVERY NOW AND THEN.
MAN, IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE SEEN THIS.
WHAT'RE YOU TWO SAYING?!

WHITE.
RED UNDERPANTS ARE MUCH MORE MANLY.
WHEREAS YOU, HAJIME-SAN...
...WEAR ENOUGH BLACK TO MAKE EVERY DAY A FUNERAL.
SNRK...!

Aha ha ha ha ha!
あはは
はは
はは
Ha ha ha ha!
?
?
?
THE CAPTAIN OF THE THIRD SQUAD, SAITOU HAJIME.

TETSU-CHAN, YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT HIM?
NO! THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER SEEN THE GUY!
HE'S ALWAYS CLOSE BY, THOUGH.
One with the scenery!
YEAH... YEAH!!
BUT HE'S STRONG.
HE WAS AT IKEDA-YA!
WHAT?!
HE REALLY BLENDS IN, THOUGH. HE'S STEALTHY LIKE THAT. SO I DON'T BLAME YOU.

IF THEY WERE SERIOUSLY FIGHTING...
...THEY'D BOTH BE DEAD.
HOOOOOOO...!
HAJIME AND OKITA ARE THE TOP TWO SWORDSMEN IN THE SHINSENGUMI.
TRUE!!
NO ONE--NOT US, NOT THE NINJA, NOT THE ANTI-SHOGUNATE ASSASSINS...
...COULD BEST THEM IN A ONE-ON-ONE FIGHT.

UNLESS YOU COULD STAB HIM IN THE HEART WITHOUT KILLING HIM. THEN YOU'D HAVE A CHANCE.
That's how he got me!
...HEISUKE WOULDN'T HAVE SUCH A HARD TIME RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS.
IF HAJIME'D SHOW OFF HIS SKILLS A BIT MORE...
Ga ha ha ha!
HOWEVER!
THE ONLY THING SERIOUS ABOUT HAJIME IS HIS LACK OF AMBITION.
Doooh...
Wowww...
...WHY DIDN'T YOU INTRODUCE ME TO HIM SOONER?
IF HE'S THAT STRONG...
WHISPER
WHISPER
HUUH
BESIDES, HE'S THAT WAY. YOU KNOW?

HMM...
I HAD NO IDEA THAT THE VICE COMMANDER'S PAGE HAD SUCH AUTHORITY!
AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "THAT WAY"?
ULP...
OH, GOOD. YOU GOT HERE JUST IN TIME.
HAJIME-SAN, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN STANDING THERE?!
Kyaaa-!
WHAT DID YOU DO, TELEPORT?
YOU'RE A LOUD TALKER.

HAUNTED?
IS THIS KID HAUNTED?
...THERE ARE TWO THINGS I'D LIKE TO SAY.
ONE IS "FORMER PRO-TECTOR."
THE OTHER... IS...
...
"HAUNTED" IS NOT THE WORD I WOULD USE, BUT...

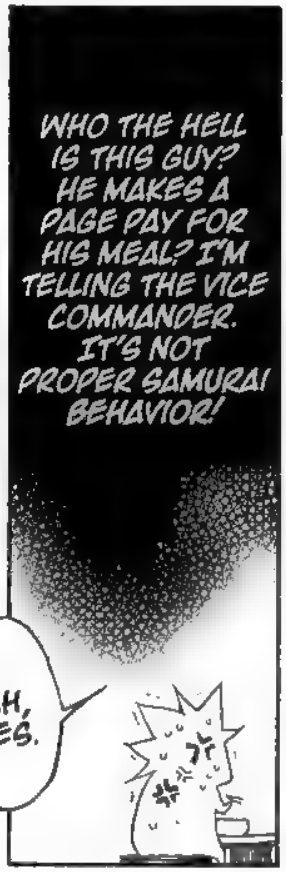
RIGHT.
TIME TO GO.
OKAY! SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, HAJIME!
W--
WAIT!
..."SILVER-HAIRED BOY."
...
TMP
TMP
...
Y-YES, SIR!
BE POLITE TO YOUR SUPERIORS.

HA!
I KNEW HE'D GO AFTER HIM!
...
TMP TMP
OR CURIOSITY.
YOU COULD SAY THAT CAT'S GOT GUTS.
SO, THAT MEANS ...
...YOU CAN SEE GHOSTS?
YOU SAID "SILVER-HAIRED BOY."
AND... AND "HAUNTED."

WHIRL
KREE
THAT IS...
...
HUH?
GRRUUMBLE...
ARE YOU... HUNGRY?

I WANT SOBA.

HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT BOY?
WHAT ?!
FLINCH


WHO THE HELL IS THIS GUY? HE MAKES A PAGE PAY FOR HIS MEAL? I'M TELLING THE VICE COMMANDER. IT'S NOT PROPER SAMURAI BEHAVIOR!
AH, YES.

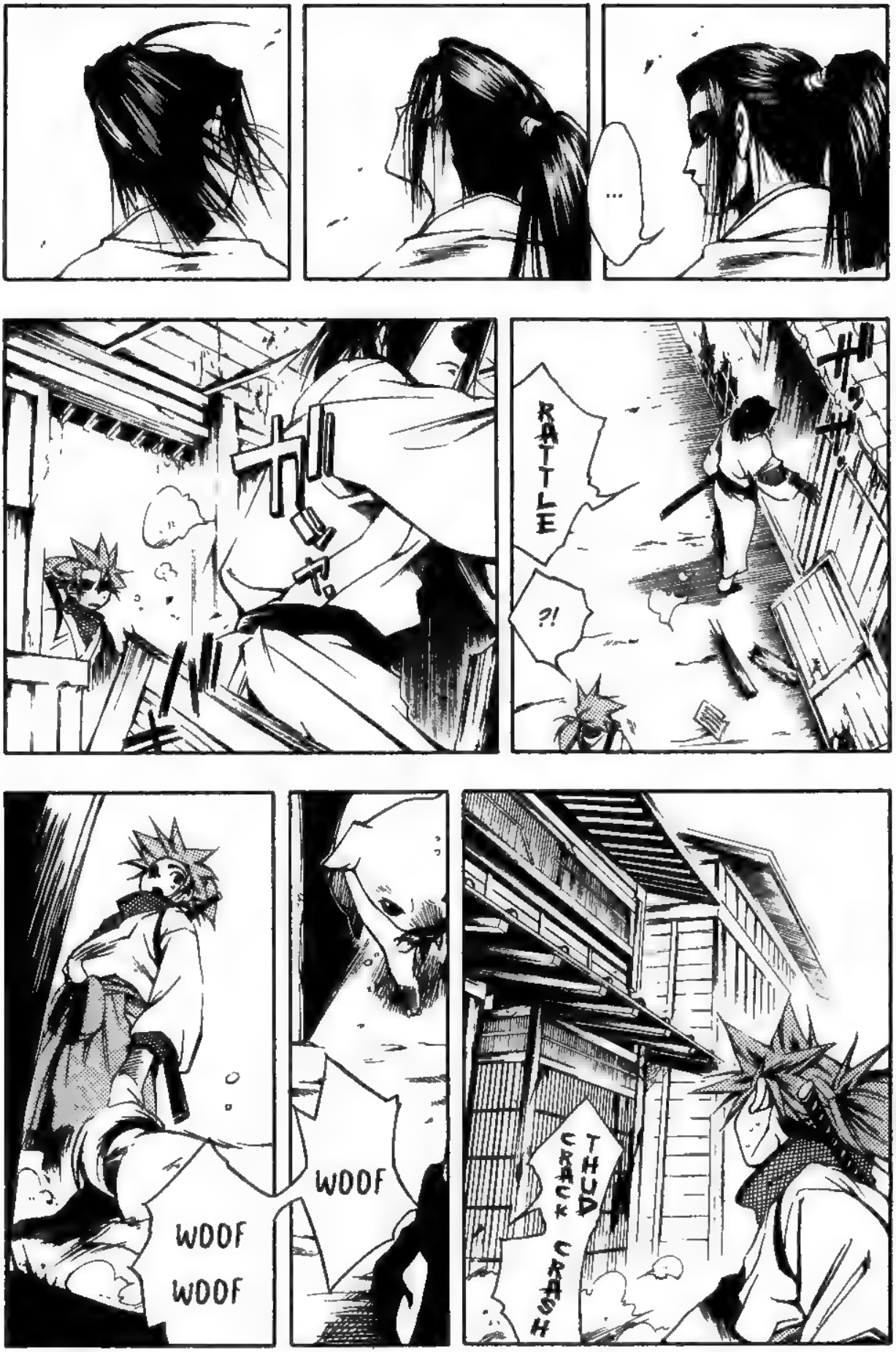
ずるる!!
…

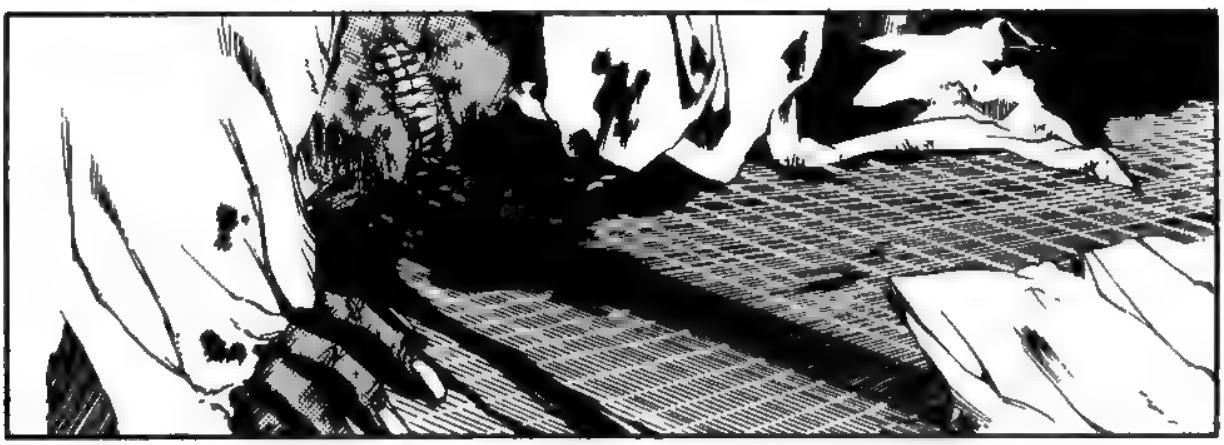
ずずずずず…
…

WE WERE FRIENDS.
UH.
WE'RE FRIENDS.
SO THEN ...
...WHY DID YOUR FRIEND-SHIP COME TO AN END?
AH...
...

...
HMMM.
...

IS HE DEAD?
IS...
IS SUZU DEAD?

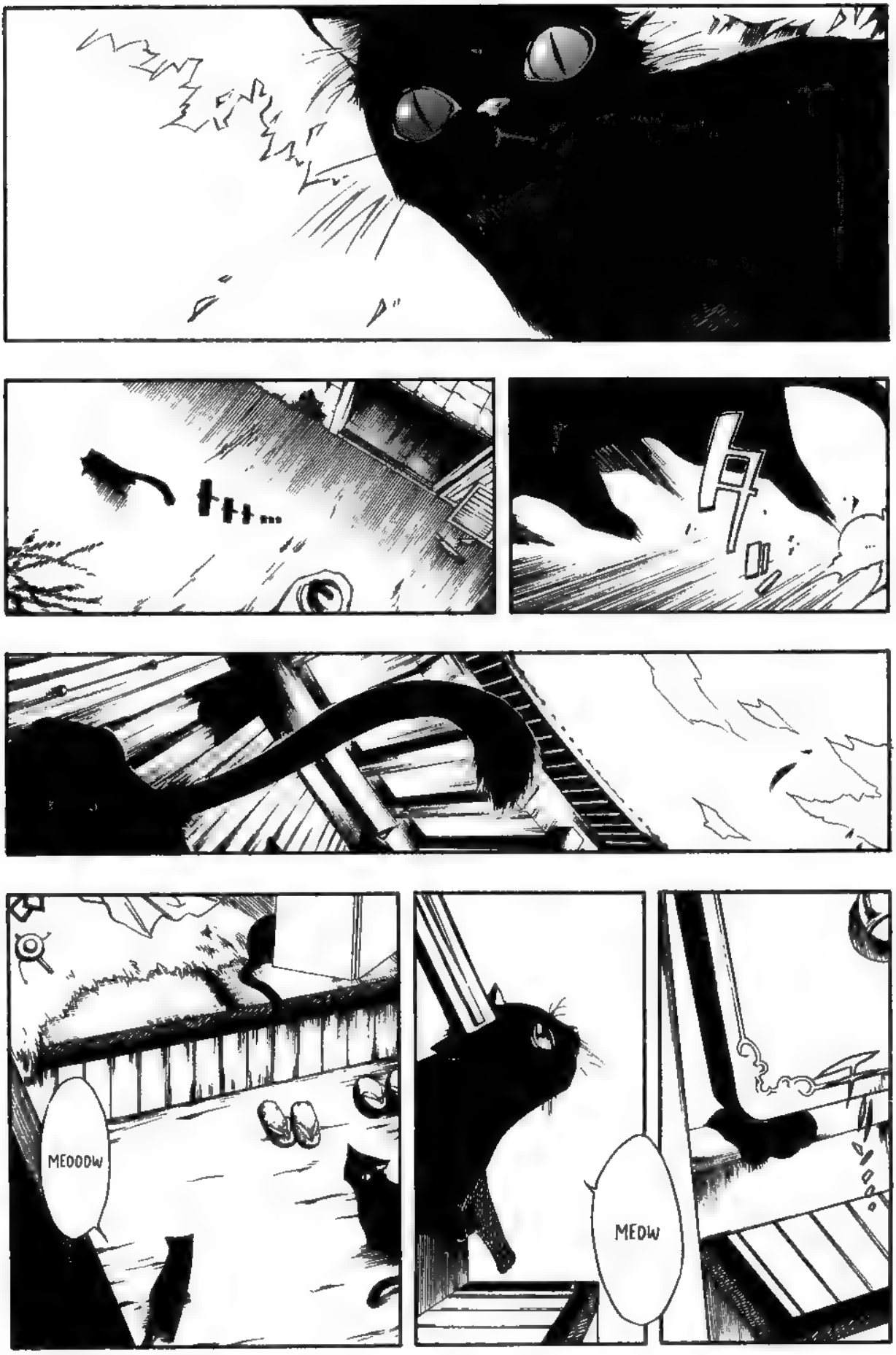

...
ナリッヤ
RATTLE
?!
WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
THUD
CRACK
CRASH



HIS NAME WAS HAYASHI MATSU-GOROU.
URRGH ...
ULP!
... UH.
HE WAS 18 YEARS OLD.
HE FLED HIS HOME-LAND AFTER A SCANDAL...
...AND BECAME A HOMELESS RONIN HERE IN KYOTO.
...
HE SUC-CUMBED TO DEPRES-SION AND TOOK HIS LIFE IN THIS EMPTY ROOM.

YOU ARE CORRECT.
I CAN HEAR THE VOICES OF THE DEAD. I CAN EVEN SPEAK WITH THEM.
SOME-TIMES, THEY EVEN TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW.
HOW-EVER...

...I CANNOT COMMUNE WITH THE SOULS OF THE LIVING.
WHAT HAUNTS YOU...
...IS THE STRENGTH OF YOUR DESIRE FOR HIM. AND THE STRENGTH OF HIS DESIRE FOR YOU.


MEOOOW
MEOW

MEOW.

IF ITOU-SENSEI JOINS THE SHIN-SENGUMI, WE WOULD BE UN-STOPPABLE.
YOU HAVE AN ACUTE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TIMES, SAKIGAKE-SENSEI.
WELL, TOUDOU-SENSEI ...
...ARE YOU GOING OUT?
WE COULD SURPASS EVEN OUR OWN REPU-TATIONS.
YES. THE DIRECTOR AND NAGAKURA ARE ON THEIR WAY.
I AM GOING OUT TO MEET THEM. ♡
GIVE MY WARMEST REGARDS TO ITOU-SENSEI.

Act 3
Sword

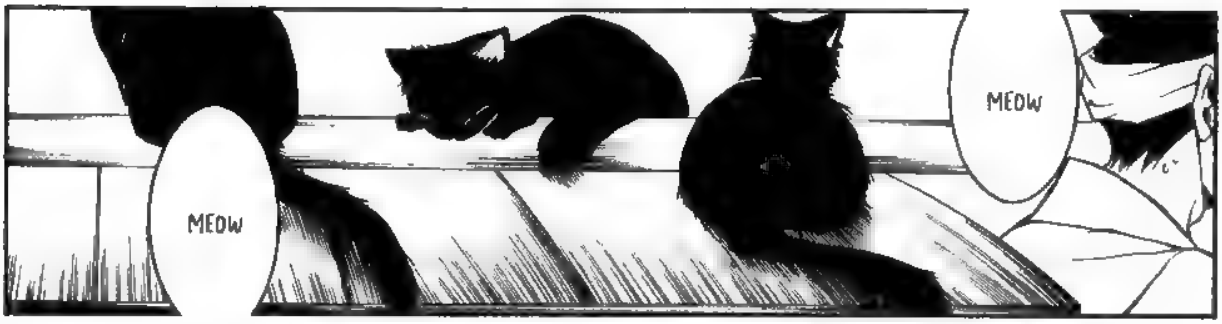
...
I SHOULD'VE BROUGHT EVERYONE ALONG WITH ME.
I REALLY MISSED THIS PLACE.
BUT YAMANAMI WOULD WANT TO STAY HERE FOREVER.

MEOW
OOOH! WHAT A CUTE KITTEN!
AH, YOU'RE NOT GONNA RUN AWAY? CAN I PET YOU?
So cute!!
CHIIING
CHIIING

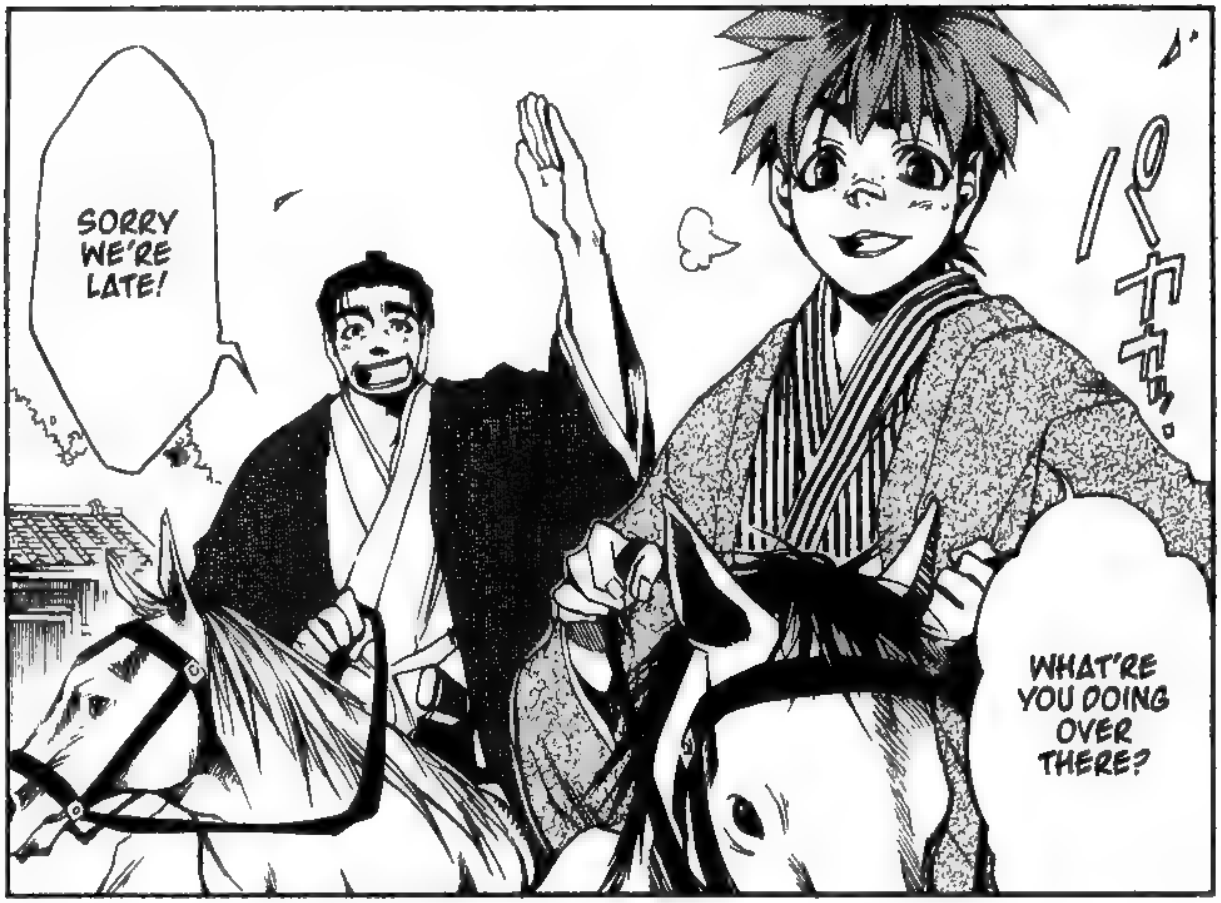
ARE YOU LOST? WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
UH...HEY THERE.
...
TOO CUTE.
And small!

...
MEOW
MEOW
MEOW
MEOW
...
MAYBE HE CAN'T TALK...?
TSUMURI!
COME HERE.

WHOA!
AH?
UWAH!
UWAAH?!

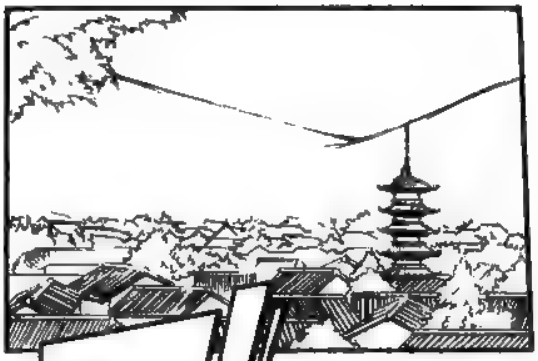

MEOW
MEOW

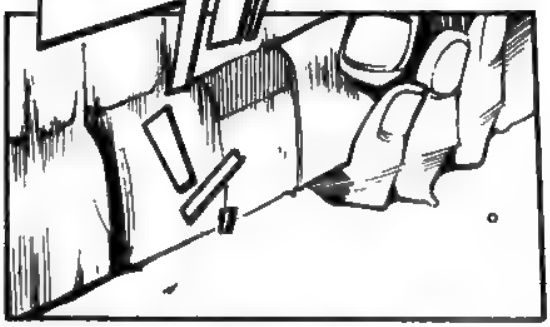
A PET BOY, HUH?
SAD. HE'S SO YOUNG.
HEEEY!
HEISUKE!
!!

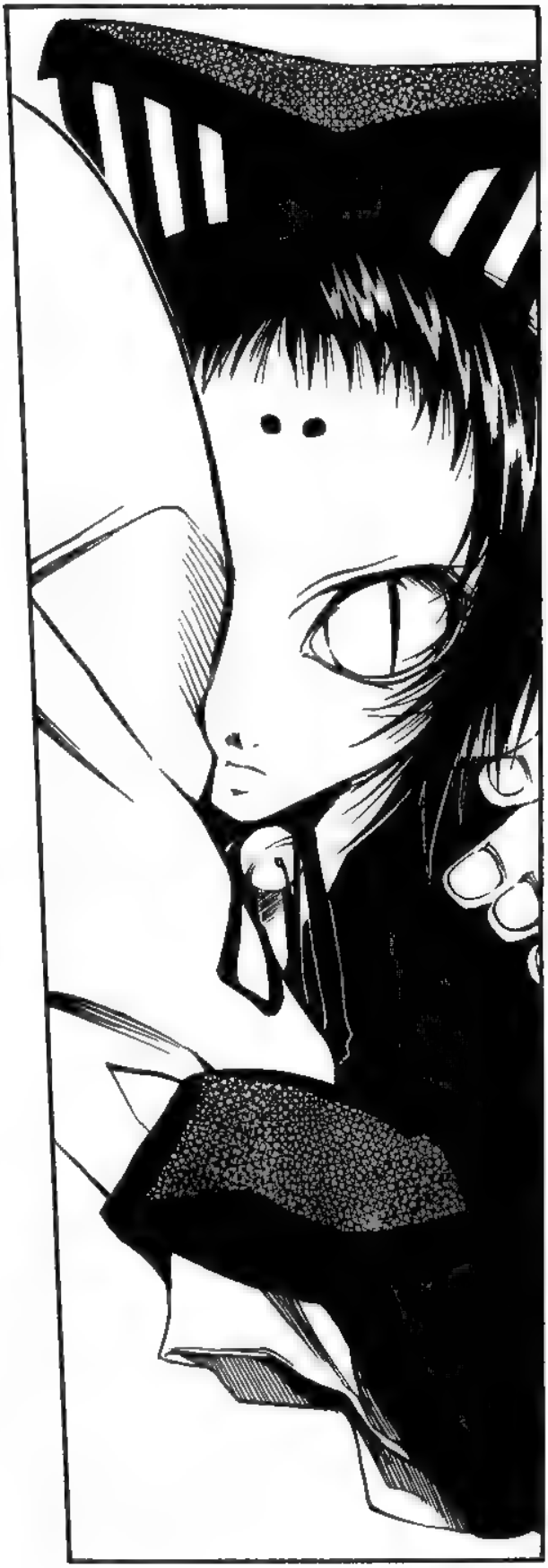

SORRY WE'RE LATE!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING OVER THERE?

AT LEAST GIVE ME AN EXCUSE IF YOU'RE GONNA BE LATE.
ARE YOU STILL TALK-ING?
NOW, NOW.
LET'S JUST HURRY OVER TO MASTER ITOU'S HOUSE.

YOU RODE HERE AND YOU'RE STILL LATE?
HEY, WATCH IT!
WE MADE IT, DIDN'T WE?







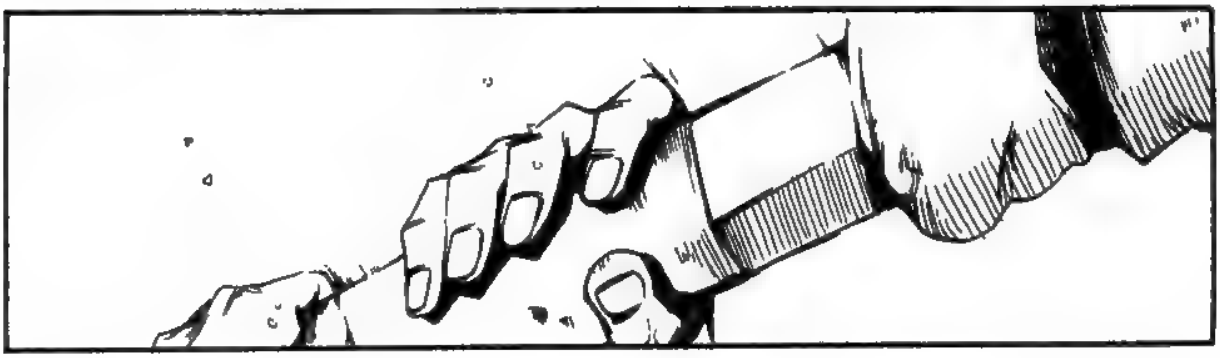
!!!
...
I DIDN'T MEAN TO DISTURB YOU.
PLEASE, DON'T STOP ON MY ACCOUNT.

WELL. THAT WAS UNEX-PECTED.
YOU?
...
SOME-THING WRONG?
NAH, IT'S NOTH-ING.
...

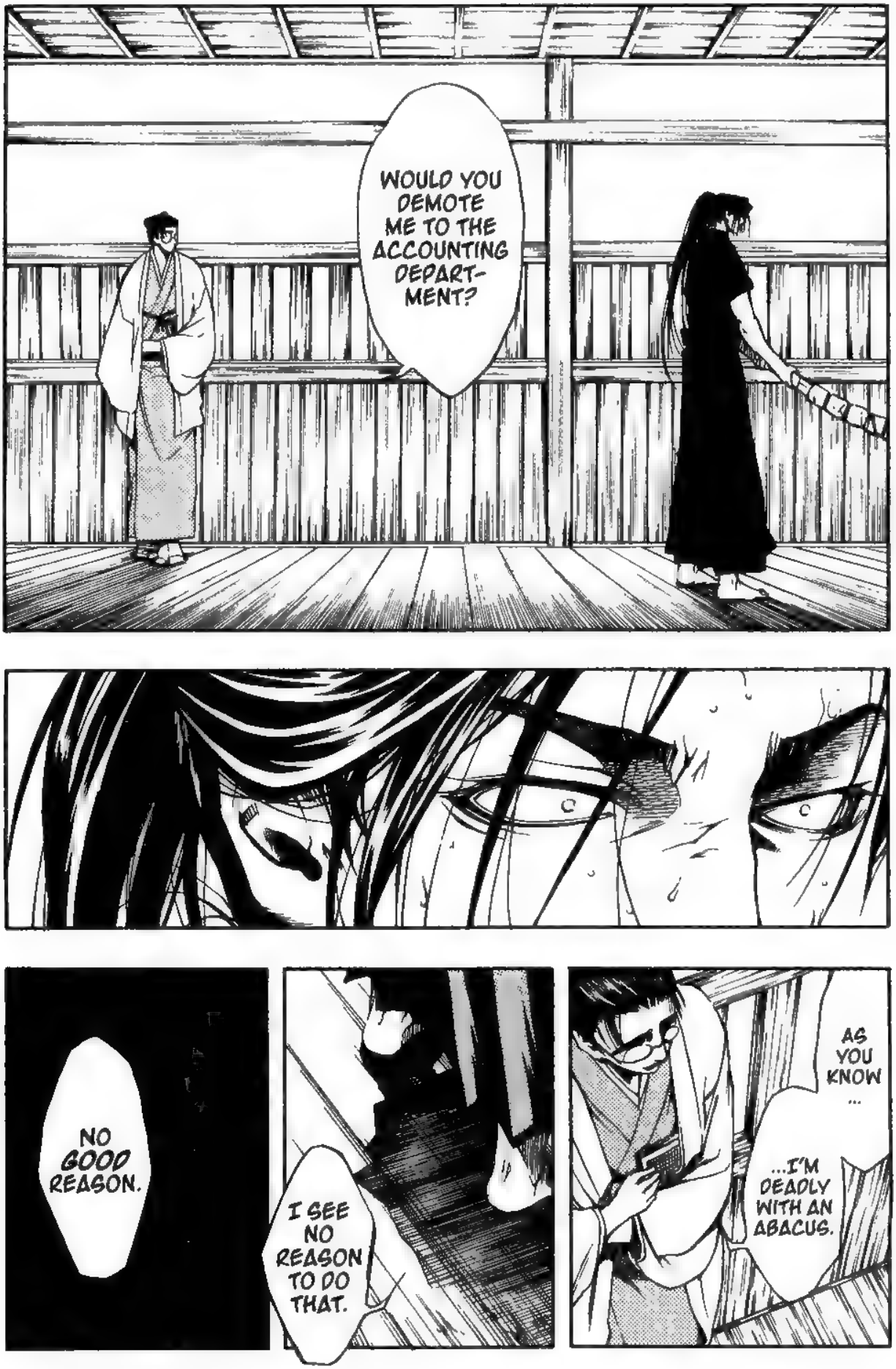
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT!
STILL PRAC-TICING IN SECRET, AND ALL.
Ha ha.
THAT NEVER STOPPED YOU FROM WATCHING ME TRAIN "IN SECRET."
I'M SORRY.
TOUCHE.

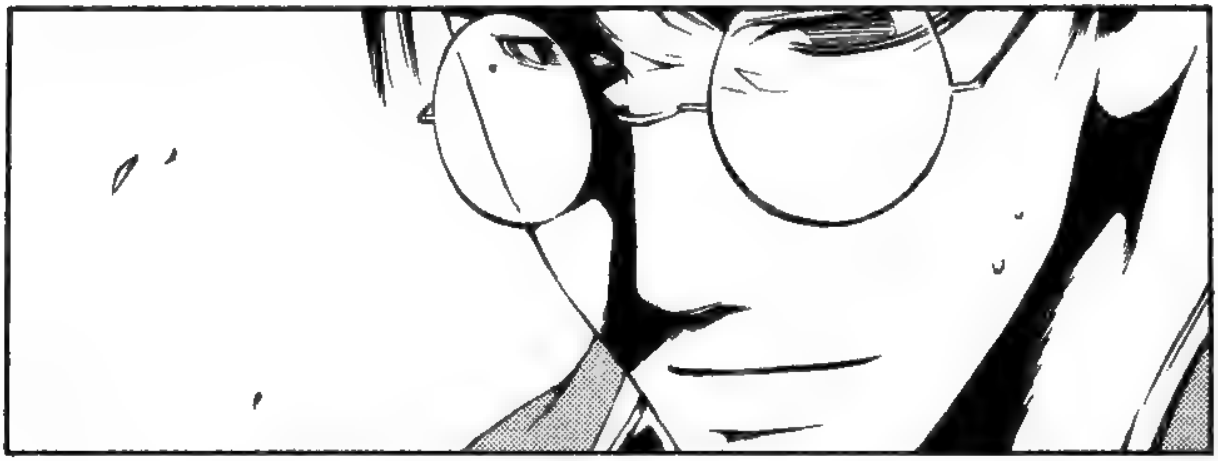
I'M SORRY.
I DON'T KNOW WHY...
...BUT I'VE HAD A BAD FEELING EVER SINCE I GOT HERE.
I'VE ARGUED WITH YOU CONSTANTLY, OVER EVERY LITTLE THING.
BUT WHY?

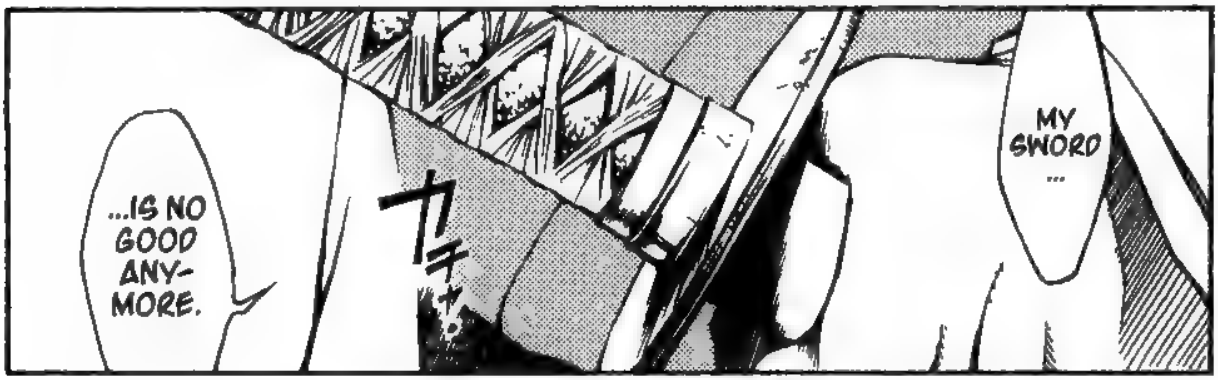
WE...
...NEVER USED TO BE LIKE THIS.

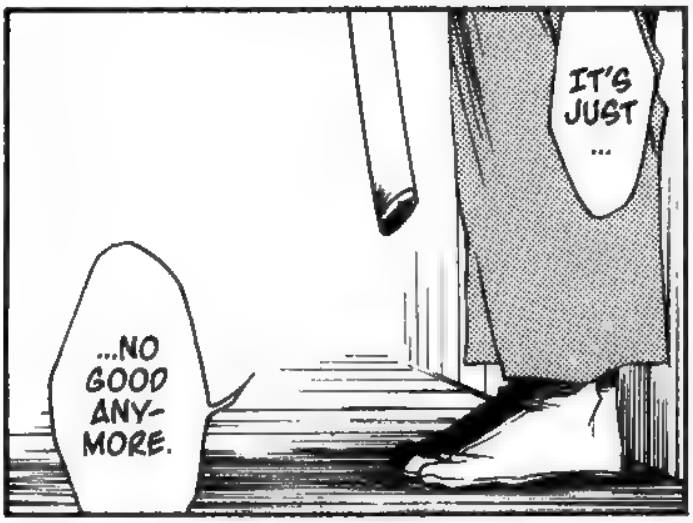


WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO REMINISCE, SANNAN-SAN.
I HEARD ITOU KASHITAROU WILL BE JOINING THE GROUP.
HE PRACTICES THE HOKUSHIN ITTOU SWORD STYLE. LIKE YOU.
...
YES, ABOUT THAT...
I DOUBT WE'LL GET ALONG.
YOU'LL HAVE TO SHOW HIM THE ROPES.


WOULD YOU DEMOTE ME TO THE ACCOUNTING DEPART-MENT?
NO GOOD REASON.
I SEE NO REASON TO DO THAT.
AS YOU KNOW ...
...I'M DEADLY WITH AN ABACUS.




MY SWORD ...
カチャ
...IS NO GOOD ANY-MORE.


IT'S JUST ...
...NO GOOD ANY-MORE.

THE BLOOD ON IT...FROM KILLING KAMO LAST YEAR...
...HAS RUSTED THE BLADE AWAY TO NOTHING.

YOU SPEAK LIKE A COWARD.

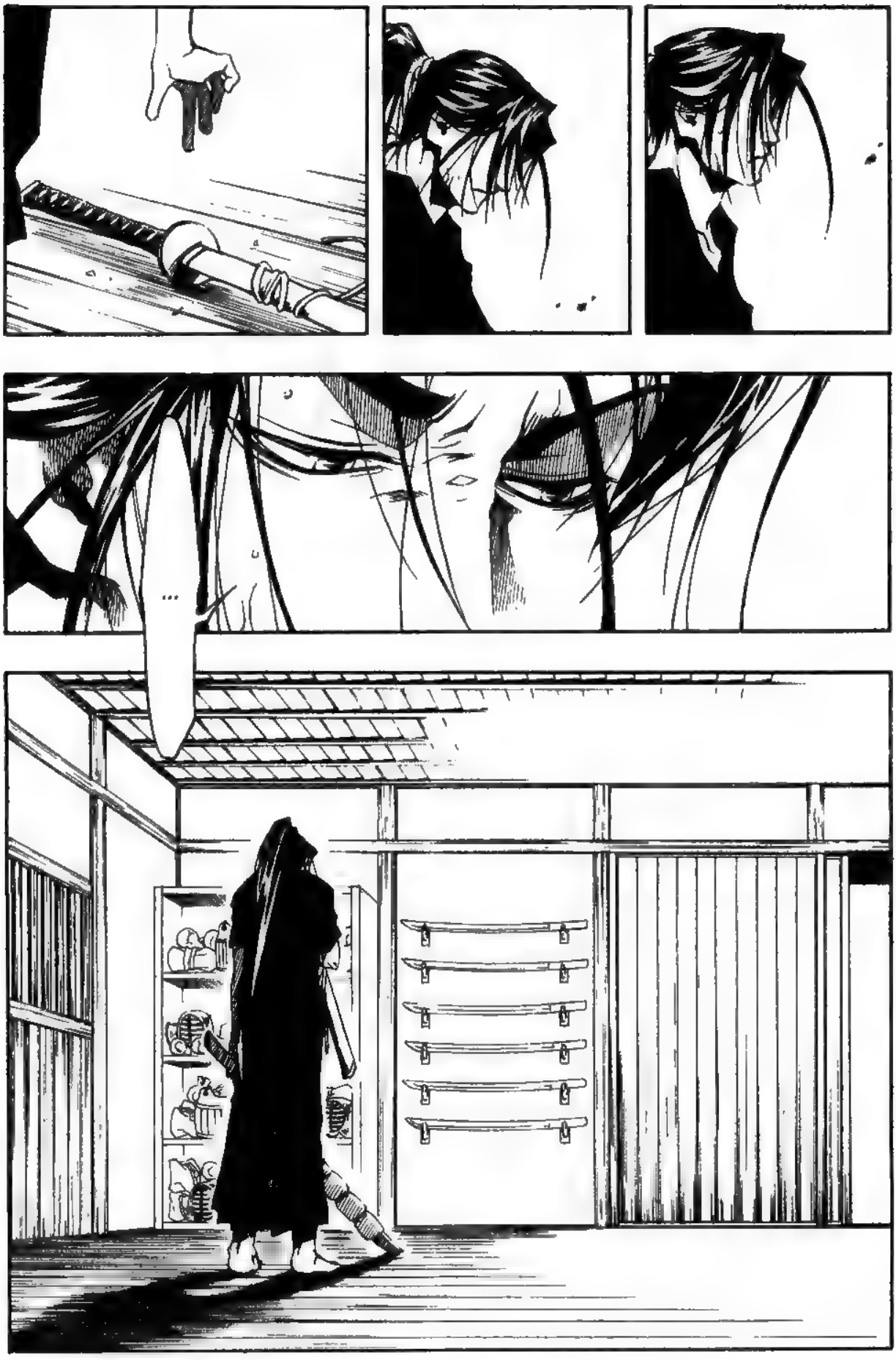
I...AM NOT LIKE YOU.
SOUJI, KONDOU AND I ALL HAD A HAND IN KILLING KAMO.
OUR SWORDS SHINE BEAUTI-FULLY STILL.
I...!
I DON'T WANT TO BE LIKE YOU.
OH?
IS THAT SO?
Heh...

LET'S SEE HOW TARNISHED YOUR BLADE REALLY IS.
DRAW.

WHAT'S THE MATTER? I SAID DRAW.
IT'S NOT RUSTED IN THE LEAST.
IT CAN STILL CUT.
IT CAN STILL KILL.

YOU ...!!
YOU THINK YOU CAN MANIPULATE EVERYONE, DON'T YOU?!
THAT IS WHAT I HATE... THE MOST!!
IF THEY DON'T FOLLOW YOUR IDEAS, KILL! IF THEY GET IN YOUR WAY, KILL!
DOES HUMAN LIFE HOLD ANY VALUE TO YOU AT ALL?!

I...
...AM NOT YOUR PAWN!

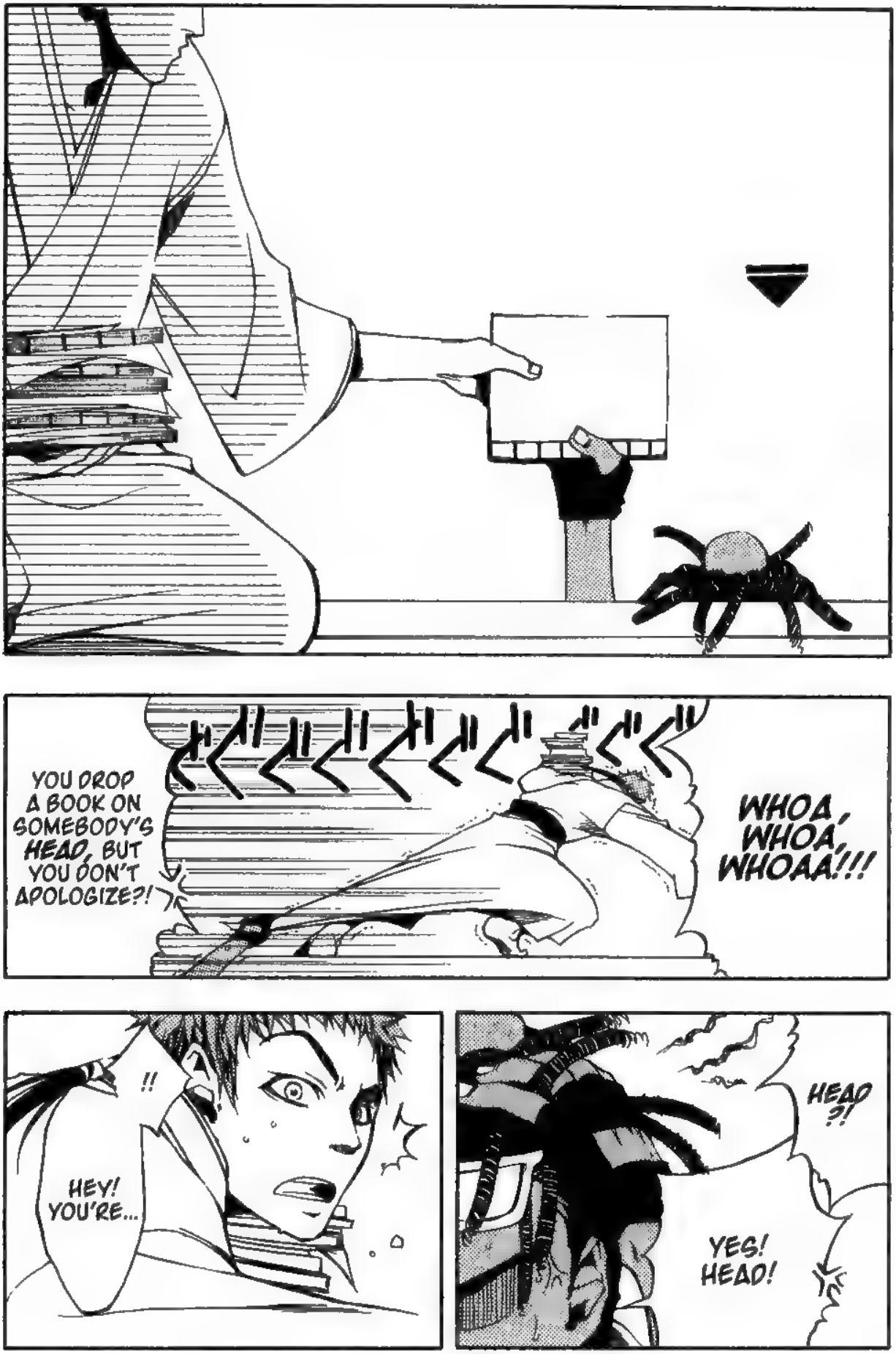


WAAHH?!

Huh?
I'M SO SORRY, TATSUNO-SUKE-KUN.
YAMA-NAMI-SAN?!
NO, NO! IT'S MY FAULT!
AHH, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
ARGH!
OW OW OW...
SORRY...

...
YAMA-
NAMI-
SAN...

HYAGH...
THROB
THROB
HEY!
YOU!
YOU
DROPPED
YOUR
BOOK!
AH!
THANK
YOU
VERY
MUCH!


YOU DROP A BOOK ON SOMEBODY'S HEAD, BUT YOU DON'T APOLOGIZE?!
WHOA, WHOA, WHOAA!!!
!!
HEY! YOU'RE...
HEAD ?!
YES! HEAD!

...THAT WEIRD --
MYSTE-RIOUS, NICE MAN!
YOU MEAN "NICE GUY."
YOU COULD SAY IT THAT WAY, TOO.
WHAT?
I CAME TO SEE YOU, OF COURSE!
YOU UNDER-STAND ENGLISH, PARTNER?
YES. SO WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO LEAD ME RIGHT INTO THE SHINSENGUMI COMPOUND, THOUGH.
SORRY. I FOL-LOWED YOU GUYS HERE.
BUT THE MINUTE I SAW YOU, I KNEW...
...YOU'RE THE SON OF THE PEACE MAKER.

Act 4
Dragon

IT'S REALLY SOME-THING.
YOU COULD BE HIS TWIN!
IF YOU HAD SOME BEARD ON YOU, YOU'D LOOK EXACTLY ALIKE.
...
HE WAS PRETTY WELL KNOWN IN THE UNDER-WORLD.
THAT FACE OF YOURS MUST GET YOU IN A PECK OF TROUBLE.
...

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
TWO YEARS AGO...
...I LOST BOTH MY PARENTS.
YOU'LL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH ME OR MY BROTHER.
SO LEAVE US ALONE.
NOW, NOW, THERE'S NO NEED TO GET DEFENSIVE.
I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE GUYS OUT TO KILL YOUR BROTHER.
IN FACT...
...IT'S JUST THE OPPOSITE.

ICHIMURA TATSUNO-SUKE AND TETSU-NOSUKE, I KNOW YOU'RE DIFFERENT FROM THE LOT THAT LIVE HERE.
COME WITH ME!

TOGETHER, WE'LL CLEAN UP JAPAN!

THIS MAN...
PLEASE. LEAVE US.

NONE OF THEM ARE OUR CONCERN.
I CAN'T LET TETSU MEET HIM.
THE SHOGUN-ATE, OR JAPAN, OR THE WORLD...
HOW SAD.
...BUT THE WORDS ARE THE OPPOSITE.
THE FACE IS THE SAME...

?!
COUGH!!
Cough!
WHAT--?!
Cough cough!
Just keep this to yourself, okay?
What? Oh.
WHISPER
TATSU-NOSUKE-SAN?
AH?
?
IT'S FUNNY MEETING YOU OUT HERE.
THANKS FOR SORTING THROUGH THOSE LEDGERS.
Nothing to it!
OKITA-SAN, YOU'VE FINISHED YOUR WATCH? THANK YOU.

...
...
RYOUMA-SAN. ♡
WHAT THE...?
Oh...
HE'S A FRIEND OF OKITA'S?
AHA HA! AND I STILL CAN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD YOU SAY! ♡
OHHH, OKKI! LONG TIME NO SEE! ♡
すぽー
YOU'RE STILL AS CUUUUTE AS EVER!! ♡

...
Whoo...

HA HA! YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED.
ALWAYS SAY HELLO SO... ROUGHLY.
THROB THROB
YES, BUT SINCE I'M ON DUTY NOW...
...I SIMPLY CAN'T LET YOU ESCAPE.
FWEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEET

TO THINK, YOU, A WANTED MAN, WOULD WALTZ RIGHT INTO THE SHINSENGUMI COMPOUND, RYOUMA-SAN!
ARE YOU HERE TO SCOUT OUT A NEW ACCOM-PLICE?

THIS PLACE IS A TREASURE TROVE OF TALENT!
BUT I DID FIND TWO NEW FACES I LIKE!
WINK
I'M STILL TRYING TO SCOUT YOU, OKKI. ♡

WELL THEN, RYOUMA-SAN...
OHH? WELL, THAT'S NICE! ♡

...YOU CAN LOOK AROUND ALL YOU WANT FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR VERY OWN CELL. ♡

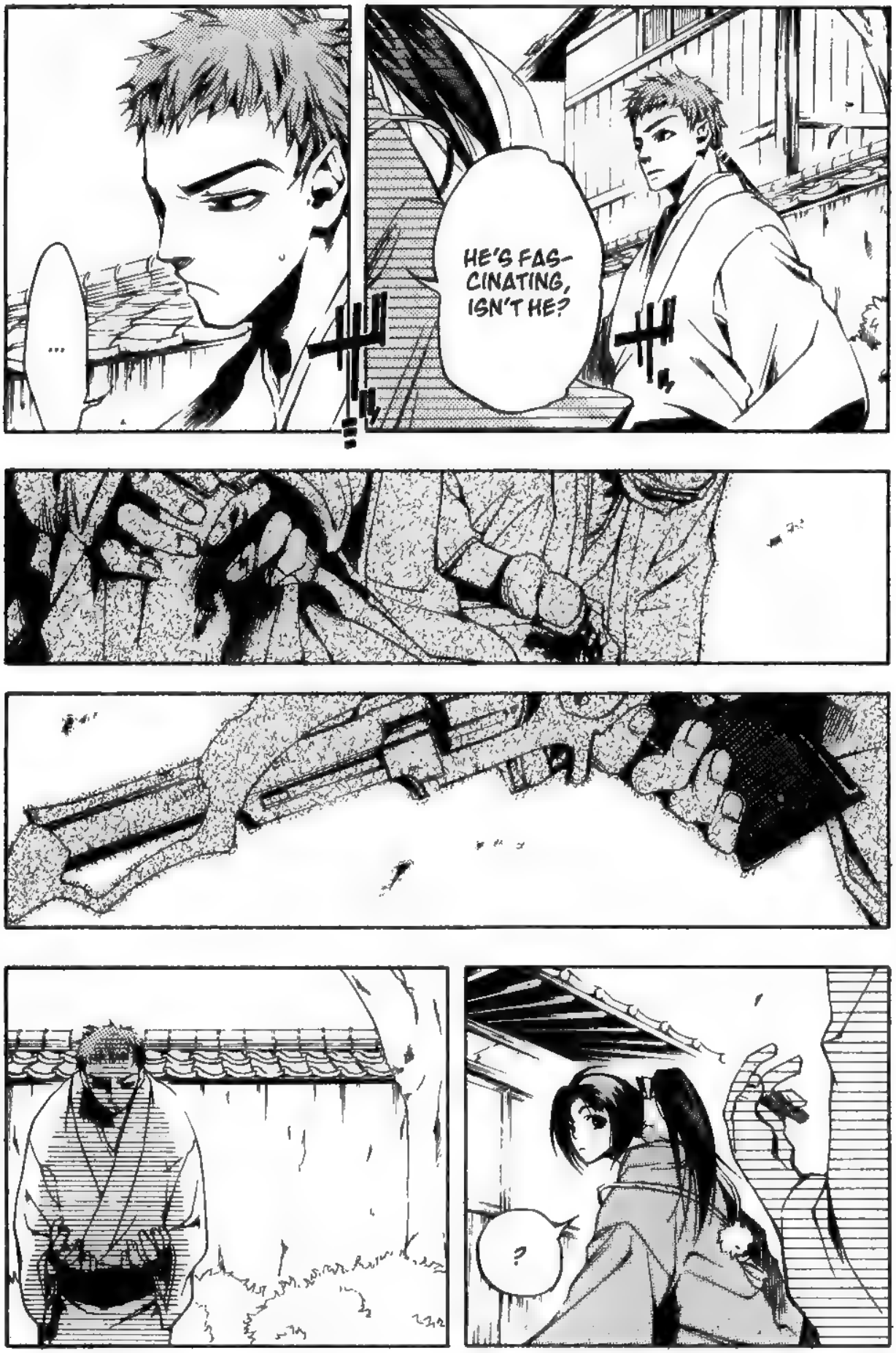
NO THANKS!
!!!
BANG BANG
GWAAAAAHH!!

LOCK DOWN THE COM-POUND!
DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE GUN! TAKE HIM!!
Ungh
...!!

HEY!
DRAGON BOY!!
!!
I GUESS IT'S GOOD-BYE FOR NOW.
BUT...
...I'D LIKE TO MEET THE "IRON BOY" NEXT TIME!
I AM A FELLOW JAPANESE, SAKAMOTO RYOUMA!!
AND I INTEND TO BE JAPAN'S NEXT PEACE MAKER!

AND THEN...THE WORLD'S PEACE MAKER!
TATSUNO-SUKE-SA--
OKITA-SAN.
...
...
...

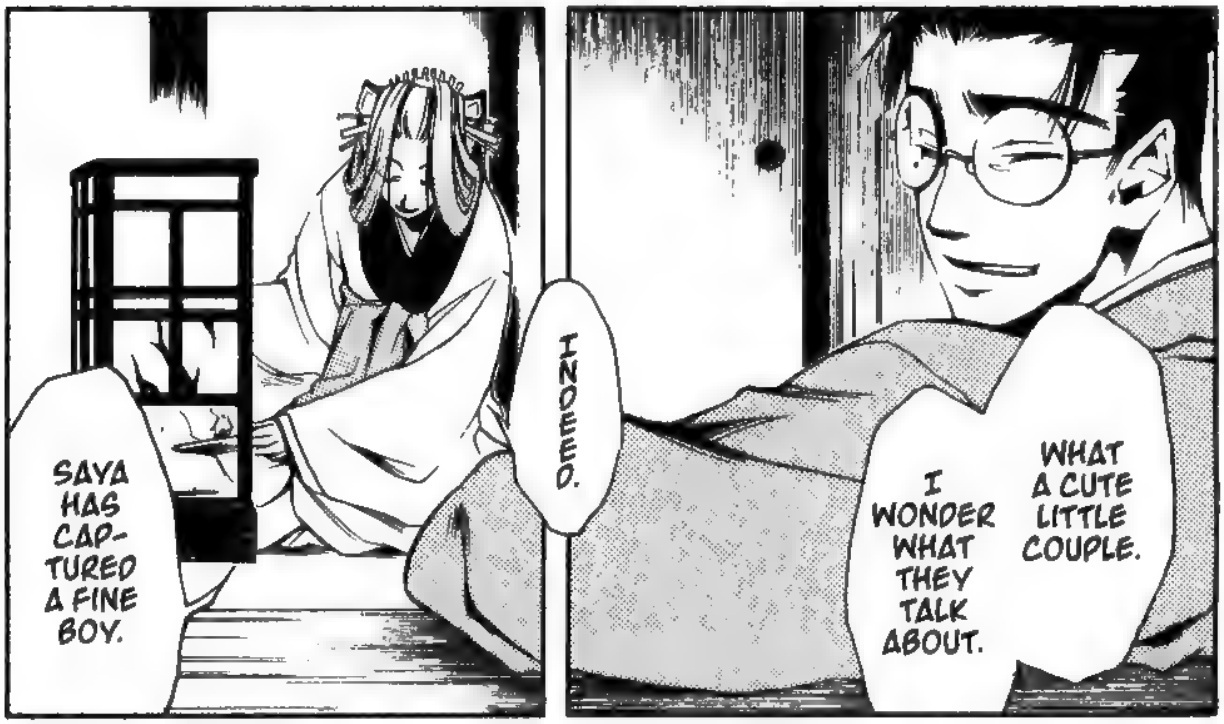
EH?
HIM?
YOU DON'T KNOW HIM?
JUST WHO IS THAT SAKAMOTO PERSON?
...
SAKA-MOTO RYOUMA ...
HE'S A RONIN FROM TOSA.
NOT AT ALL.
GIGGLE
AS YOU NOW KNOW!
HE'S BOTH A DANGER-OUS AND IMPORTANT PERSON TO US.
CERTIFIED SWORDS-MAN OF THE HOKUSHIN ITTOU STYLE. WORKED AT A DOJO IN KOCHIBA.
HE LEFT TOSA AND STARTED MAKING CONNEC-TIONS WITH A GREAT MANY SAMURAI.


...
HE'S FAS-
CINATING,
ISN'T HE?
?

SAY, SAYA?
BEN
BEN
BEN
BEN

BEN BEN ♫
JUST WHAT IS A PEACE MAKER?
YEAH, I DON'T KNOW, EITHER.
ほのぼの
?
?
?
...?
ALL DAD WOULD SAY IS, "ONE DAY YOU'LL UNDER-STAND."
HOW AM I SUP-POSED TO UNDER-STAND?!
AND WHERE'S THAT OLD MAN NOW?!
!!

AND HE'S GOT WILD HAIR!
...
SNIGGLES
HE'S REAL! I SAW HIM! HE EXISTS!
ACK! YOU'RE LAUGHING AT ME AGAIN!
WHAP WHAP
TOOTLE TOOTLE
PBBT!
SNRK!


SAYA HAS CAP-TURED A FINE BOY.
INDEED.
I WONDER WHAT THEY TALK ABOUT.
WHAT A CUTE LITTLE COUPLE.

...THEY'LL BE JUST LIKE US.
SOME-DAY...
...
THAT LITTLE GIRL...
BI BIEN
BI BIEN
EH?
WILL SHE SOMEDAY ALSO...
...EN-TERTAIN GUESTS?

IF SHE IS HERE IN SHIMA-BARA...
...SHE HAS NO OTHER CHOICE.
SHE DOESN'T UNDER-STAND THAT YET.
AND THAT IS HEART WREN-CHING.
NO. YOU MISUN-DERSTAND.

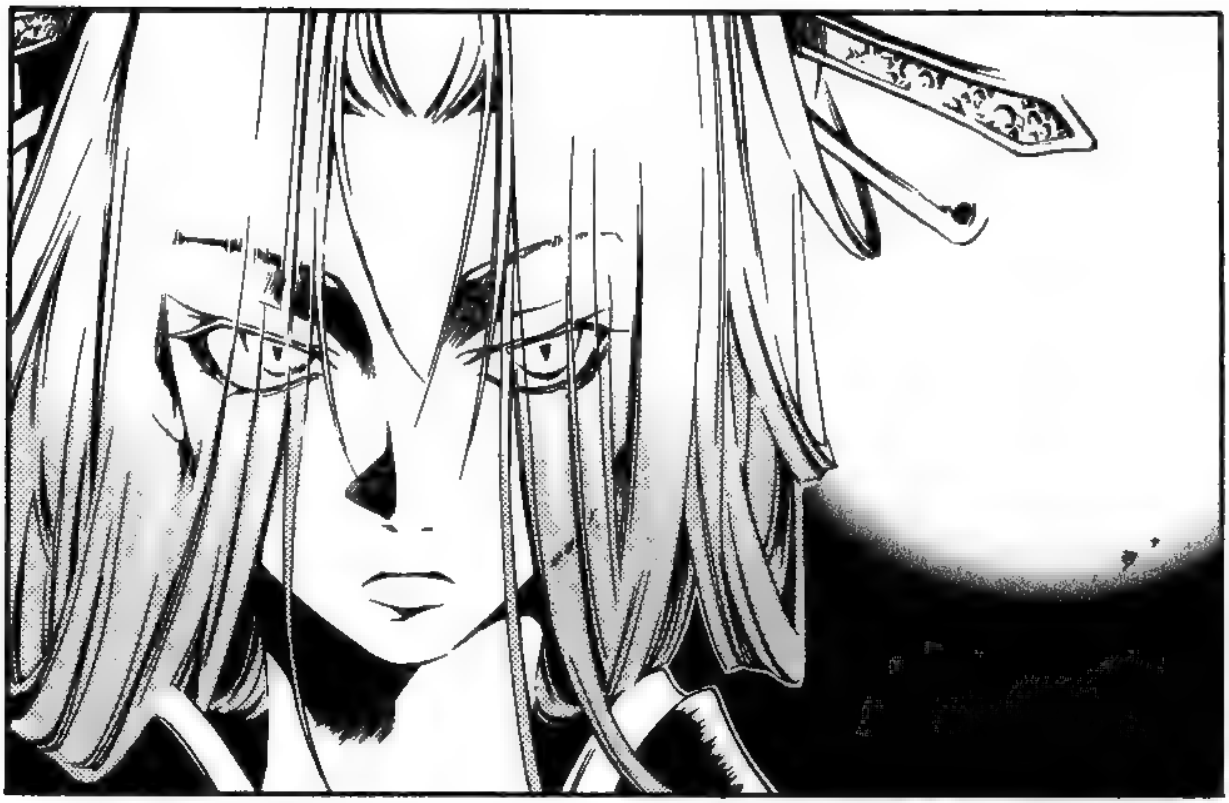
IT ISN'T SAD...
...EVEN IF IT SEEMS SO.
HERE, OSAYA WILL HAVE A GREAT LIFE.
BESIDES, SHE HAS A DREAM...
...TO BECOME A BEAUTIFUL LADY. AND WHEN THAT HAPPENS...
...A MAN WHO LOVES HER WITH ALL HIS HEART...
...WILL COME FOR HER.

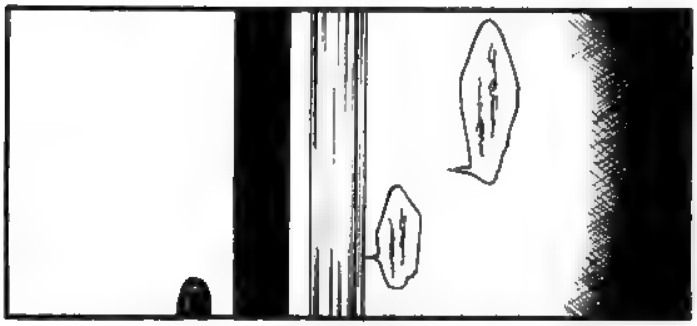
SHE'S GOT A DREAM ...
...JUST LIKE MINE.
IT'S NO DREAM.
IT'S NOT A DREAM. IT'S NOT A LIE.
I WILL COME FOR YOU.
EVEN SO...
...I AM NOT WORTHY OF YAMANAMI-HAN.
THAT ISN'T TRUE!

I LOVE WHO YOU ARE, NOT WHAT YOU ARE.
AS LONG AS WE TRUST EACH OTHER, THAT IS ENOUGH.
THIS IS NO DREAM.
THIS IS NO LIE.
I WILL TAKE YOU AWAY FROM THIS.
WHEN I DO...
...WE WILL FINALLY BE TO-GETHER.

WELL THEN.
WE'LL BE GOING.
GOOD NIGHT.
G'BYE! G'NIGHT, SAYA!
PRAC-TICE THE SHAMI-SEN A LITTLE MORE, EH?
OWW!!

THEY LOOK LIKE FATHER AND SON FROM HERE.
WELL, SAYA.
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY.
NOD
...





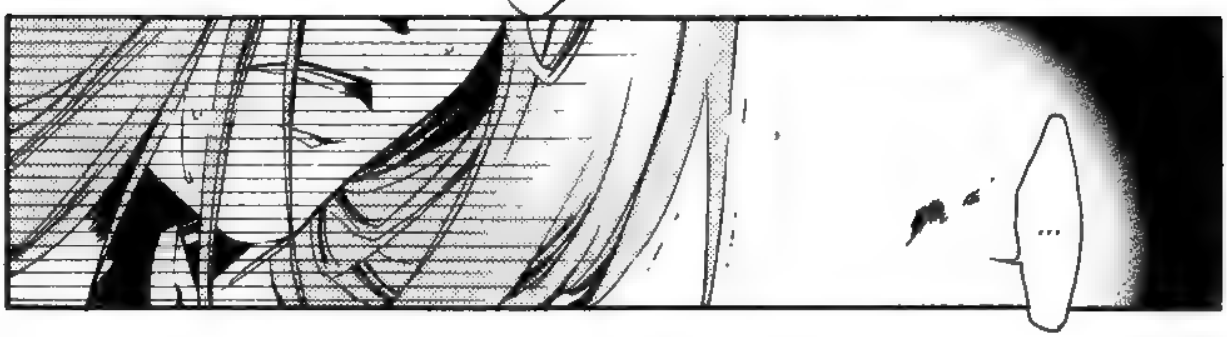
"I LOVE WHO YOU ARE, NOT WHAT YOU ARE."

A SAMURAI CAN HAVE NO LOVE ABOVE HIS THIRST FOR BLOOD.

GIGGLE GIGGLE

THAT IS THE WAY OF THINGS.

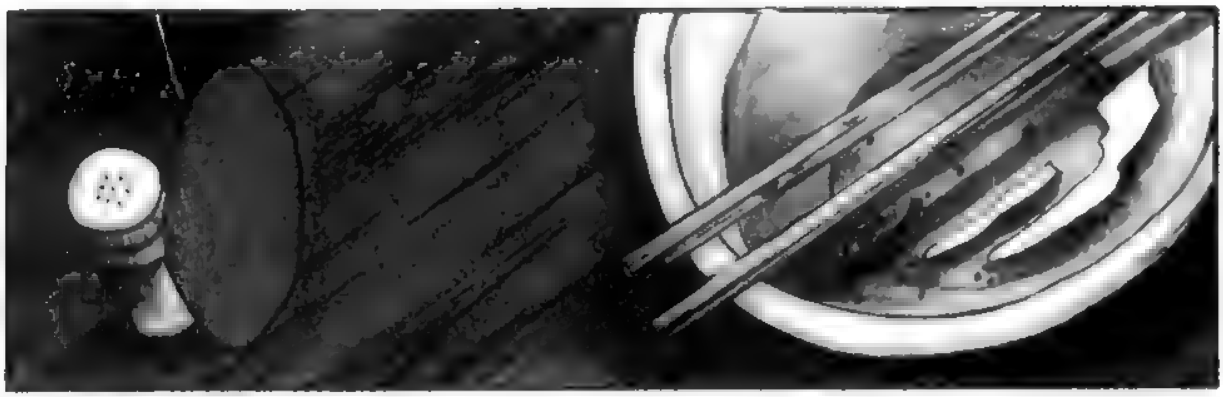
GIGGLE



WHUMPF
WHUMPF
WHUMPF
...
THAT VOICE...
GIGGLE
GIGGLE
THEY'VE RETURNED

COME TO MIYAKO WITH ME.
NO MORE WORRYING.
THE DAYS OF HELPLESS-NESS AND RESTLESSNESS ARE DRAWING TO AN END FOR YOU NOW.
I INTEND TO KILL THE MIBURO WITH THIS.
COME.
LET'S GET STARTED, SUZU.

Act 5
One Again

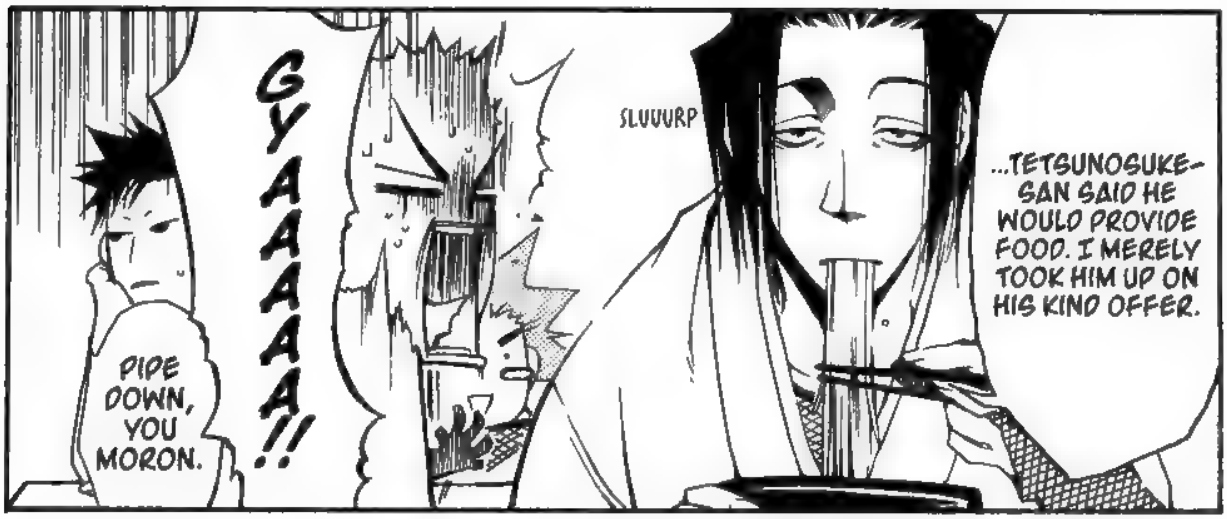


YOU GET TAKEN BY EVERY CHARLATAN THAT PASSES THROUGH TOWN! FIRST OFF...

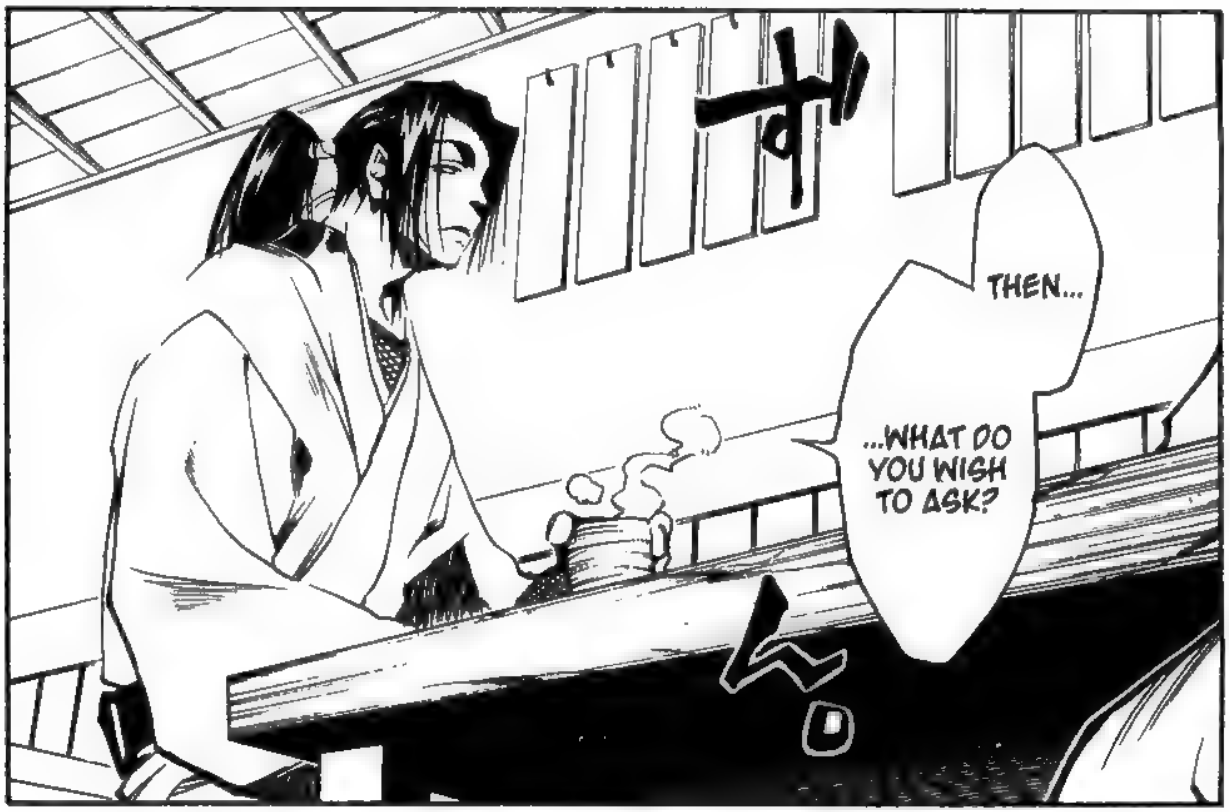
THIS ONE REALLY WORKS!

AREN'T YOU TOO OLD TO BELIEVE IN FORTUNE-TELLING?

THAT'S BECAUSE...
...HE'S TELLING FORTUNES IN A SOBA SHOP? THAT'S SHADY.


GYAAAAA!!
PIPE DOWN, YOU MORON.
SLUUURP
...TETSUNOSUKE-SAN SAID HE WOULD PROVIDE FOOD. I MERELY TOOK HIM UP ON HIS KIND OFFER.

I BELIEVE I NEVER SAID THAT!
That's not it!
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT PAYING FOR SECOND-RATE FORTUNES WITH SOBA?
AH, PARDON ME.
Please sit.
S-SAITOU-SAN, WHAT BRINGS YOU TO A PLACE LIKE THIS?


THEN...
...WHAT DO YOU WISH TO ASK?

HE'S SERI-OUS...?
OOH, OOH!
I'M FIRST!!
SQUEEZE
CRAMPED...

THE SAVINGS POUCH I PUT IN THE CLOSET...
Gone!
WHEN I LOOKED FOR IT YESTER-DAY, IT WAS GONE!
THE THIEF MUST BE A TEAM MEMBER. I WANNA KNOW WHO! TELL ME!
RELAX.

YOU DID NOT HIDE YOUR SAVINGS WELL. YOUR GUARDIAN FOUND IT AND IS KEEPING IT FOR YOU.
WHAAAT?!
TATSU-NII, YOU STOLE MY SAVINGS?!
... URK.
YES! YOU WOULD'VE SQUAN-DERED IT!
YOU DIDN'T EVEN HIDE IT WELL!
WOULD YOU TWO KEEP IT DOWN?
Aha-!
THERE'S SOME-THING I'D LIKE TO ASK.

TATSU-NOSUKE-KUN.
Ha ha...
CAN YOU JUST ADMIT TO HIM THAT YOU WERE JOKING?
...BUT HE'D BELIEVE JUST ABOUT ANY-THING.
THIS KID'S BEEN GOING ON ABOUT HOW SAITOU-SAN CAN SEE GHOSTS AND ALL...
SEEEE? I TOLD YOU HE WAS GOOD!
SHIP
Hoo...
YOU ARE THE SPITTING IMAGE OF THE FATHER WHO EVEN NOW STANDS NEXT TO YOU.
THIS IS SERIOUS FORTUNE-TELLING HERE!
...
NEXT QUESTION !!
NEXT!
WELL, I'D--
...

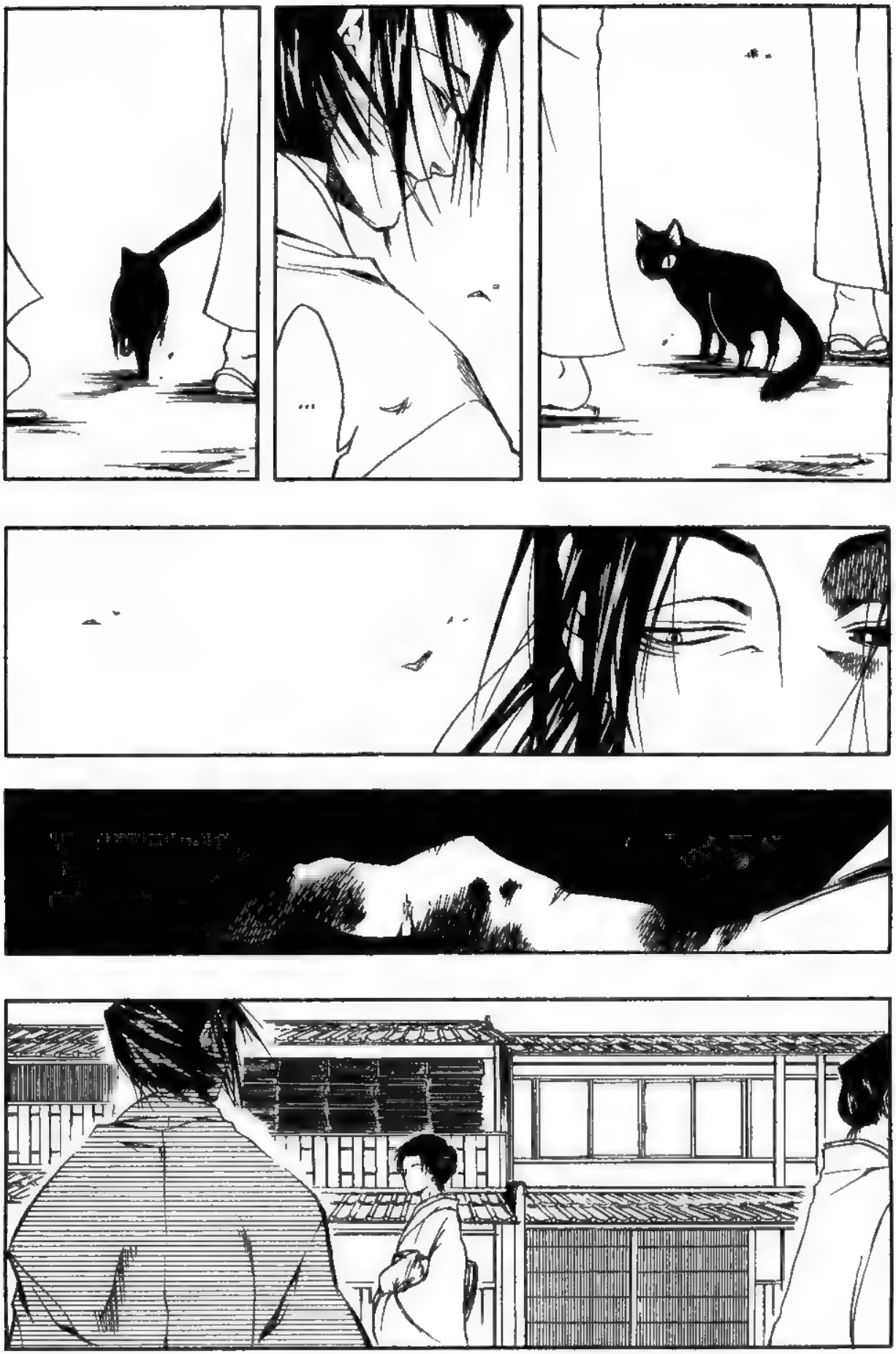
WHERE WILL WE BE IN FIVE YEARS?
BUT I DO NOT PREDICT FUTURES, AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE.
I'M SORRY.
JUST AS YOU CANNOT MAKE A DECENT TEA, EVERYONE HAS SOMETHING THEY CANNOT DO.
fooo...
YOU SHOULDN'T GO AND BLAME HIM JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE DISAP-POINTED.
LEAVE IT BE, ICHI-MURA.
WHY NOT?! THAT'S WHAT FORTUNE-TELLING IS GOOD FOR!

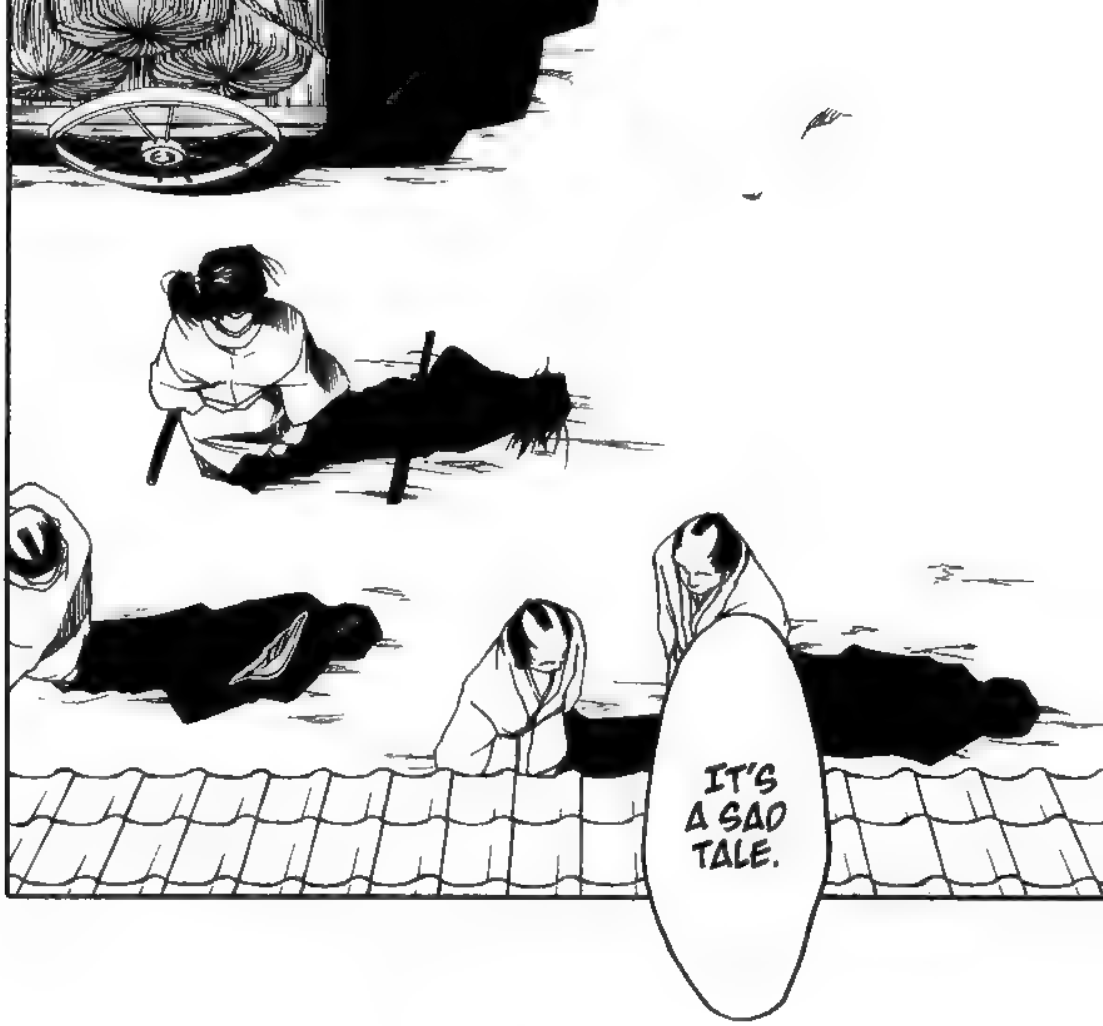
?
HIS NAME IS ITOU OOKURA.
VERY SOON, A NEW OFFICER WILL JOIN OUR GROUP.
!
WELL, ON THIS SPECIAL OCCASION I'LL TELL YOU OF ONE COMING EVENT.
WHAT'S WRONG, SUSUMU? YOU KNOW THE GUY?!
I'VE HEARD THINGS HERE AND THERE. HE'S A BIG CELEB-RITY.
I HAD WONDERED WHO MIGHT BE COMING.
HE TRAINED IN MITO ON THE SHINTOU MUNEN STYLE, THEN WENT ON TO BECOME THE FUKUGAWA DOJO MASTER, TEACHING THE HOKUSHIN ITTOU STYLE.
NOT ONLY IS HE A SKILLED SWORDSMAN, BUT HE'S ALSO HIGHLY KNOWLEDGEABLE IN LITERATURE. HE'S ALSO QUITE THE LADIES' MAN AND IS A HARD-LINER FOR IMPERIAL REVERENCE AND THE EXPULSION OF ALL BAR-BARIANS.
THIS DOESN'T BODE WELL.

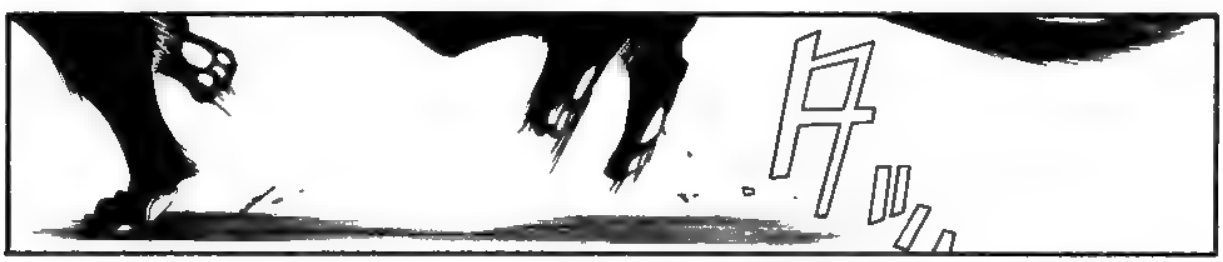
WELL THEN.
NO PROBLEM FOR ME. I'M ON HIJIKATA'S SIDE.
My, my...
THE UPPER RANKS WILL BE KIND OF CROWDED.
TREASURE THE LIFE YOU HAVE AT THIS MOMENT.
TO THE THREE OF YOU, I SAY THIS.
THINGS OF THAT NATURE COME AND GO IN TIME. MAN AND ALL THAT IS HIS ARE TRANSIENT.
WHEN THE QUICK RIVER'S WATERS GO STILL, THE WATER STILL REMAINS. DROSS FROM BELOW WILL SOMETIMES FLOAT TO THE SURFACE.

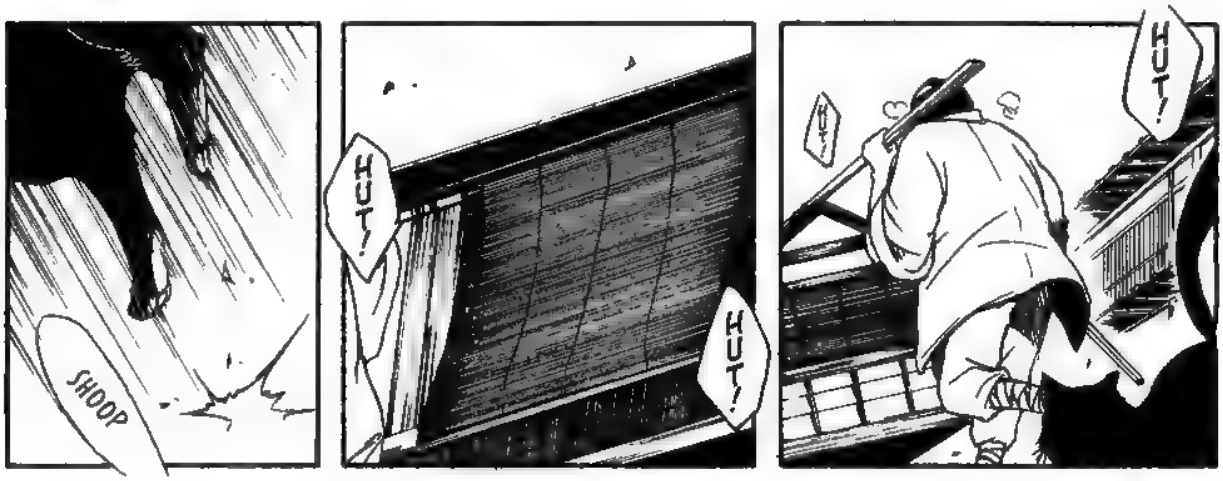
MAY TODAY'S SHORT MOMENTS OF JOY...
...BECOME TREASURED MEMORIES IN THE FUTURE.
AH! YES!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
EXCUSE ME.
OTHER MATTERS REQUIRE MY ATTENTION.
THERE NOW.

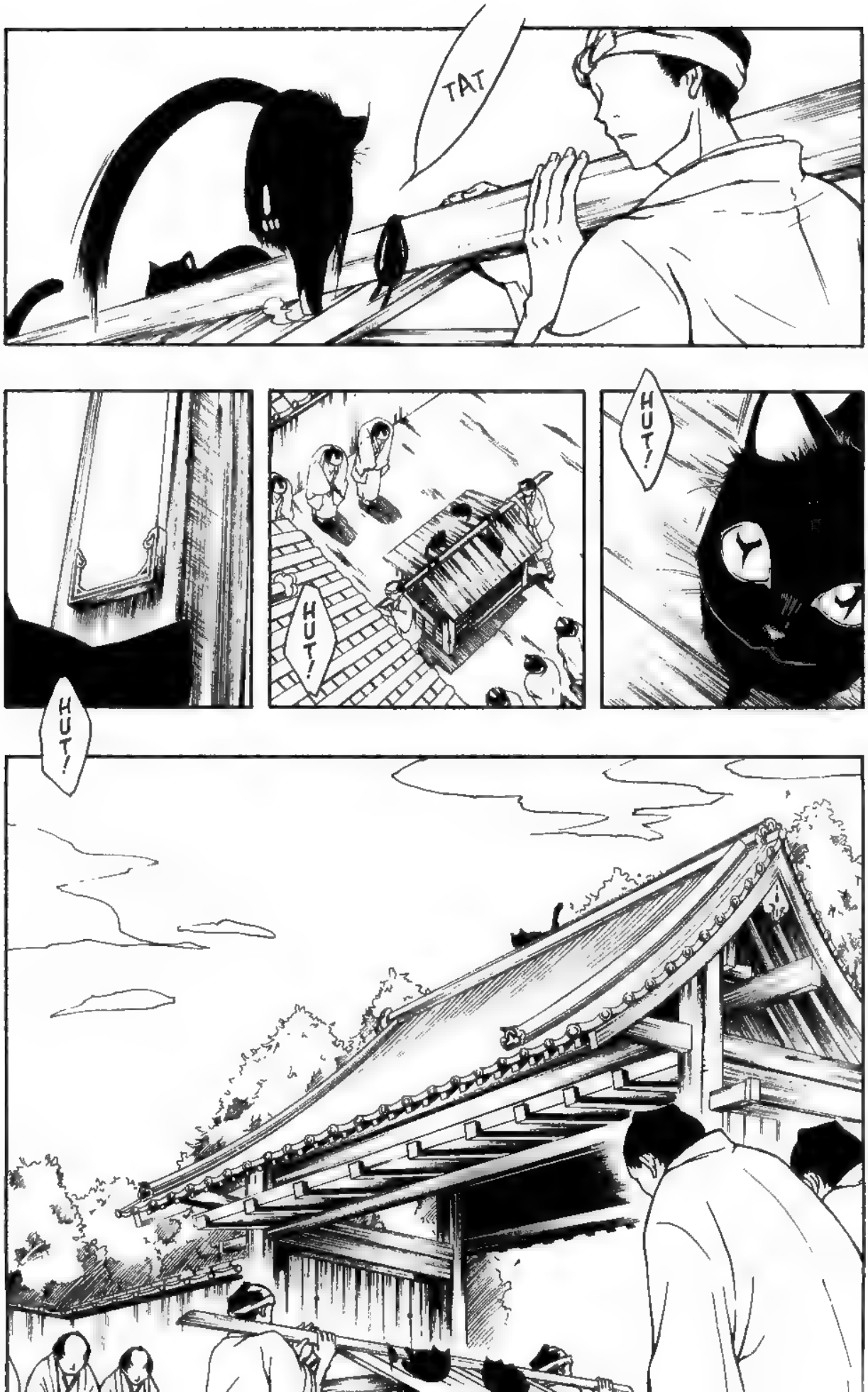
TALK ABOUT BEING MATURE FOR ONE'S AGE.
LIFE'S TAUGHT HIM A LESSON OR TWO.
BUT...
...I GET THE FEELING HE'S HIDING SOME-THING.




IT'S A SAD TALE.


HUH...


SHOOP
HUT!
HUT!
HUT!
HUT!


TAT
HUT!
HUT!
HUT!

WEL-COME BACK.
WEL-COME BACK.
WEL-COME BACK...
...MY LORD.
HMM!
WEL-COME BACK, MY LORD!
YOU MUST BE TIRED AFTER SO LONG A TRIP.
NOT AT ALL. IT WAS QUITE ENJOY-ABLE.

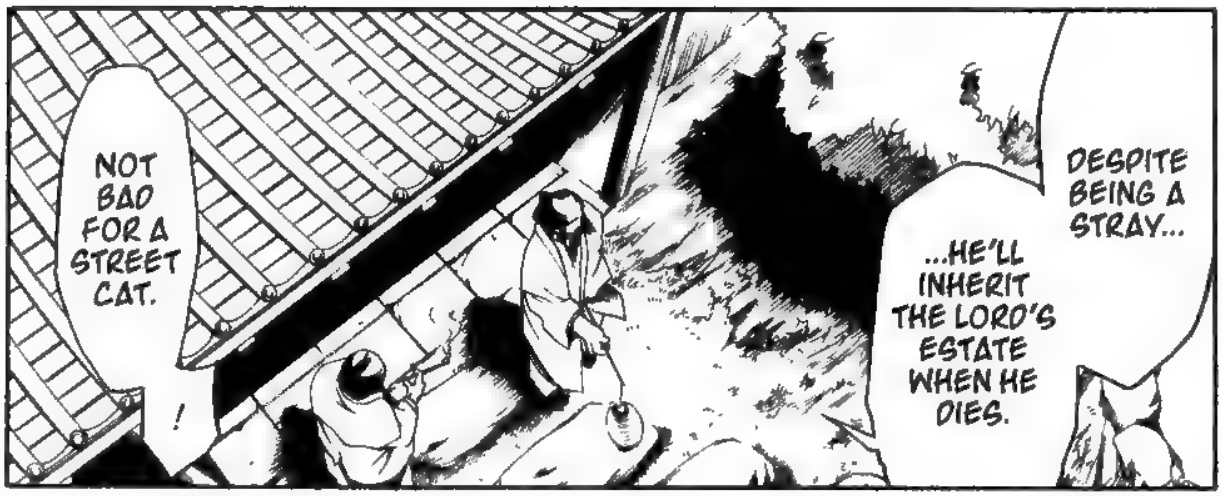
HMM!
YES. HAVE IT BROUGHT TO MY CHAMBERS.
WOULD YOU CARE TO VIEW IT?
THE ITEM YOU ORDERED HAS ARRIVED.
I'LL USE IT TONIGHT.
ボボボボ…
CREEEAK

I'M BACK NOW...
...NATSUKI.
DID YOU BEHAVE WHILE I WAS AWAY? YOU MUST HAVE BEEN LONELY.
HA HA
I'M SORRY FOR SEPARATING YOU BOTH LIKE THAT.
...
Purrrrr...
SQUEEZE

NOW THEN.
IT SEEMS HE'S ASLEEP AGAIN.
SUZU?

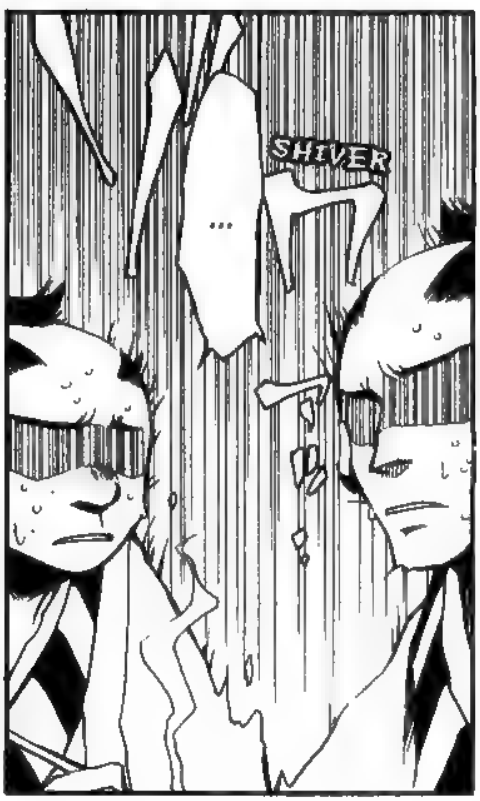
WELCOME BACK.
GLAD TO BE BACK, SUZU.
I HAVE SOME-THING NICE FOR YOU.
COME TO MY CHAM-BERS TONIGHT.

HEY, LOOK! THE "YOUNG MASTER" IS ABOUT.
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHOA! IT'S THE FIRST I'VE SEEN OF HIM.
I GUESS HE IS ONE OF THE LORD'S "RARE CATS."
MORE LIKE "KITTEN," EH?
Heh heh!


DESPITE BEING A STRAY...
...HE'LL INHERIT THE LORD'S ESTATE WHEN HE DIES.
NOT BAD FOR A STREET CAT.
!

ニィ

DON'T BE RIDICU-LOUS! HOW COULD HE, FROM THAT DIS-TANCE?!
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
HE DIDN'T HEAR US...?


SHIVER
...

THE GUY'S FACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS.
TONK

OOOH ...
IT SUITS YOU PERFECTLY.
I'VE FINALLY FOUND SUITABLE CLOTHES FOR YOU TO WEAR.
IT'S MADE FROM SILK AND GOLD. IT'S TOP QUALITY!
THE HIDDEN PATTERNS IN THE CLOTH CHANGE WITH THE SHIFTING OF THE LIGHT AROUND YOU.

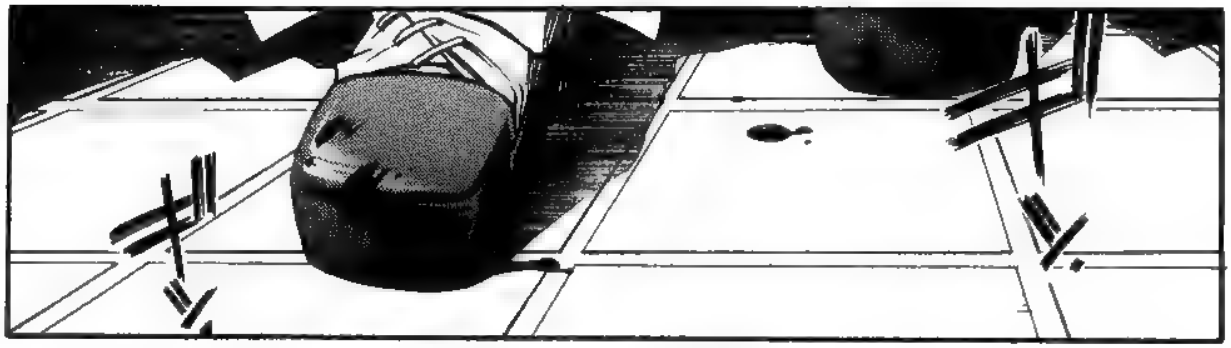
SUZU IS VERY HAPPY NOW.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MASTER.
NO NEED FOR FORMAL SPEECH.
I ENJOY SPOILING YOU.
YOU ARE THE BELOVED SON OF THE HOUSE OF YAMATO.
NO ONE WILL DARE QUESTION YOUR BEHAVIOR.
YOU ARE NO LONGER AN ALLEY CAT.
KITTENS ARE SO ADORABLE WHEN THEY BAT AT THINGS WITH THEIR LITTLE PAWS.

WELL, MASTER...
...WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT HOW SPOILED I AM?
I BOUGHT MYSELF A CRIMI-NAL THE OTHER DAY.
HE WAS GOING TO BE EXECUTED, AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE WASTE OF TALENT.
HO-HO!
YOU BOUGHT SOMEONE'S LIFE, THEN? SPLENDID!
I COULDN'T STAND THOSE TWO DOOR-MEN, SO I BOUGHT DEATH FOR THEM, TOO.
THEIR BODIES ARE PROBABLY COLD BY NOW.
I BOUGHT BOTH DEATH AND LIFE.
AND NOW...

ABOUT THAT UGLY, WRINKLED, OLD, HOMO FACE OF YOURS.

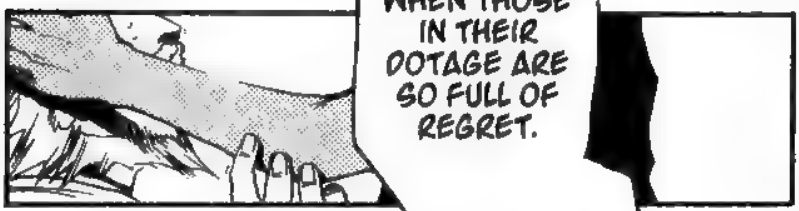
WHAT...
...ARE YOU SAYING --?

TEE HEE. WHY SO SHOCKED?!
DID YOU NOT SAY YOU ENJOY SPOILING ME? WELL, I THOUGHT I'D START SPOILING MYSELF.
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE AFRAID?!
HA! AHA HA HA HA HA!
...!!



THIS CAN'T ...
SUZU, YOU--
THANK YOU FOR SAVING ME FROM THE STREETS.
BUT UNFORTU- NATELY...

S-STOP! SOME- ONE!! HELP!!


IT'S SO SAD WHEN THOSE IN THEIR DOTAGE ARE SO FULL OF REGRET.

SO TO HELP COMPEN- SATE FOR THINGS, I OFFER UP...

...JOY OFTEN COMES FROM...
...AN- OTHER'S MISERY.
AND ALL THAT MISERY JUST KEEPS PILING UP.

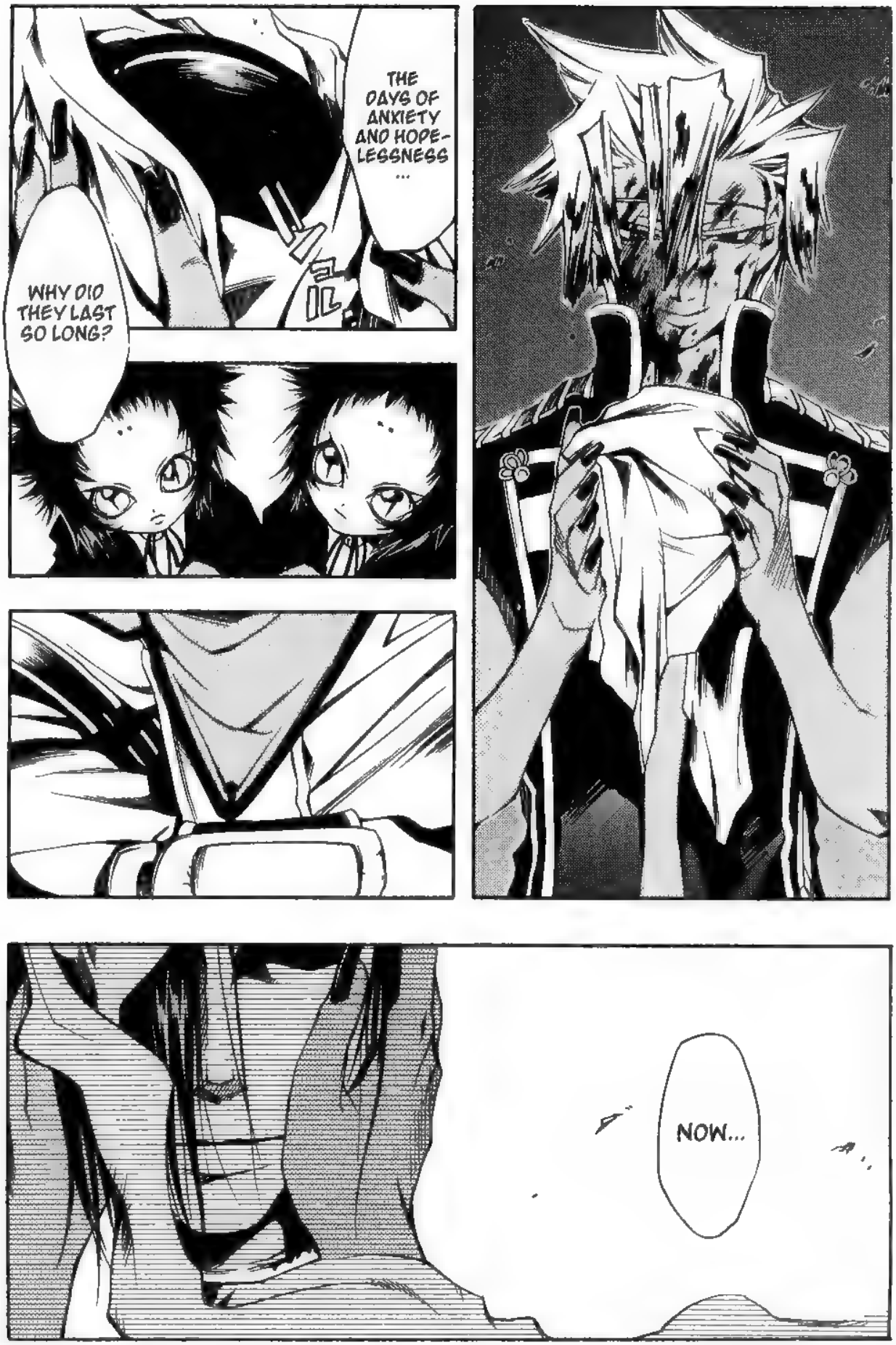
...THIS MEAGLY LITTLE LIFE.

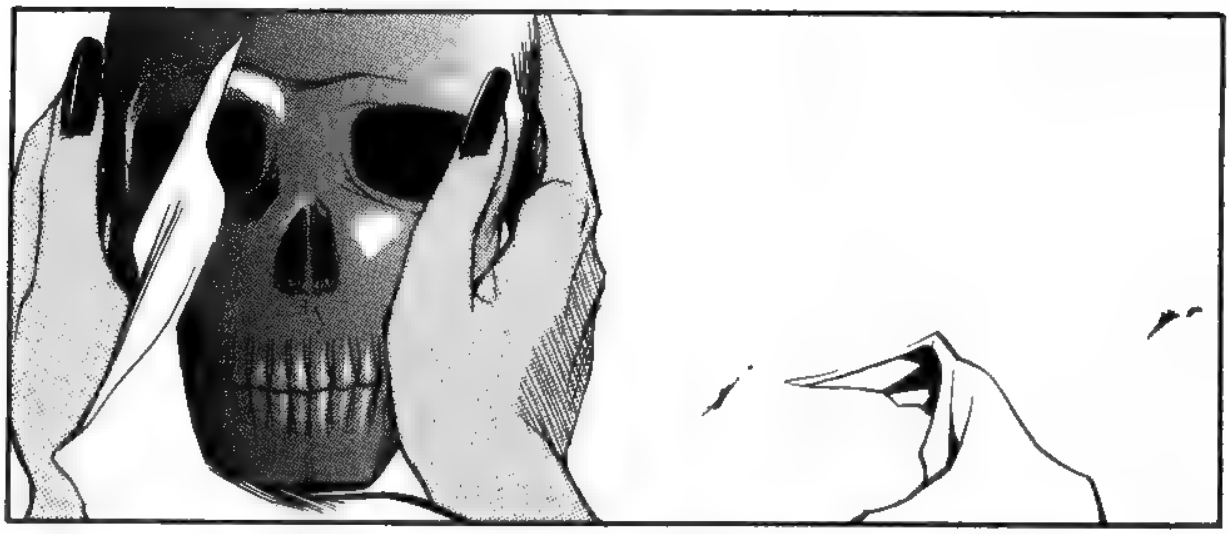
GUSH
PLIP
...

CHIIING

CHIIING

CHIIING

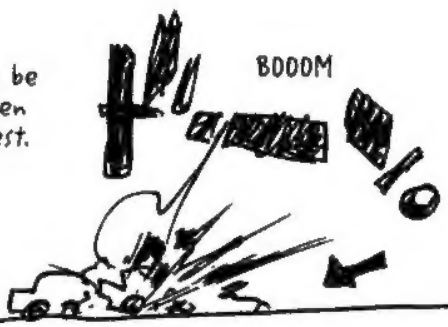

THE DAYS OF ANXIETY AND HOPE-LESSNESS ...
WHY DID THEY LAST SO LONG?
NOW...



Peace Maker Kurogane 1 FIN

So, this is the first volume of Peace Maker Kurogane, and I'd like to introduce myself to everyone! I'm Nanae Chrono!
I'm tired, but I'm keeping myself in High-Tension mode.
What kind of drawing is this...?
Bachi-Kuuun!
I lost a little weight.
I also wanted to let everyone know that I just got back from a half-year break, and that's why installments have been coming out slowly. My apologies to all.
I also want to apologize to all the first-time readers here, since this story reads like a sequel.
I don't get it...
I'll be so happy if people bother to read it.
The cast's pretty much the same except for the main character. I changed him a bit.
Grown a bit taller, too!!
"We can't have that!!" you say? Then I'll just change the costume a bit.
So I took this half-year vacation, and if you're wondering what I did during that time...
Well, I finally got around to learning how to drive.
In the beginning, there was no way I could picture myself behind the wheel.
Front Desk
Im-possible...
TREMBLE
Mom
Me
If I ever drive a car, it'll turn into a rolling coffin...
I got my license eight months back, and have not had an accident...
Surprising, huh?!
It's got a cute li'l butt...
My beloved Byuuta-chan!
Every time I drive anywhere, I think, "Today might be the day I die." Probably because it performs like an Audi TT.
Pessimist.

Nobody told me to be extra-careful when taking my road test. ★



Well, from now on, I'm going to be real careful behind the wheel so there aren't any sudden halts in the installments due to accidents. Hey, I'm not kidding here!

It was really cool that their Chinese characters are so similar to Kanji! Thanks to that...

...We could always figure out where we were!

We ate a lot, we bought a lot. I love traveling. It's just so much fun! Asia is so nice!

I bought a "China girl" dress, too!! ★

This was my first trip abroad, too! BONZAI!!

It was a family trip.

This one's about my first trip to Hong Kong!! They use bamboo scaffolds for the buildings, too! So nice!!

So anyway, I had a lot of fun on my break. Now I'm fully charged up. From now on, I'm doing my best!! I will tell you that the story's getting darker and darker...but I'll be happy so long as there are brave readers out there who will continue to read my story.

Oh, and parents shouldn't give this to their kids saying, "This will spark your interest in history," because the story doesn't reflect actual historical events. I made it all up!! Hmf...

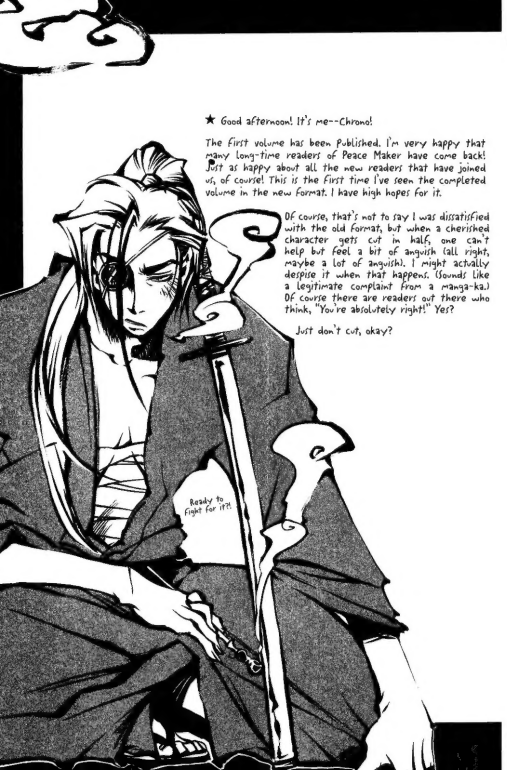
Oh, and I apologize for my sloppy writing and bad doodling. ★

★ Good afternoon! It's me--Chrono!

The first volume has been published. I'm very happy that many long-time readers of Peace Maker have come back! Just as happy about all the new readers that have joined us, of course! This is the first time I've seen the completed volume in the new format. I have high hopes for it.

Of course, that's not to say I was dissatisfied with the old format, but when a cherished character gets cut in half, one can't help but feel a bit of anguish (all right, maybe a lot of anguish). I might actually despise it when that happens. (Sounds like a legitimate complaint from a manga-ka.) Of course there are readers out there who think, "You're absolutely right!" Yes?

Just don't cut, okay?



★ The story is developing little by little, and I am mindful of the growing angst level. It's fun drawing Tetsu as he grows physically, but he'll be doing some serious mental growing, too. For right now, he's growing up well... I wonder what you readers would think if he were to take a negative turn, character-wise?

★ The central act of the story will concern Suzu's fall from grace. I often wondered if the story would suffer if I just kept him as a ronin. Then it occurred to me that since he's the victim of a crime, he could react by becoming a killer himself. If you're a grown man or woman, you'd probably say, "If it were me, no way." Therefore I chose this storyline. (Then again, there are probably some people out there that are okay with Suzu's choice.)

I apologize in advance for all the unpleasant scenes, I had no choice but to put them in there. That goes for all the upcoming scenes. (Smirks while writing)

★ Yaaay! Well, that wraps it up for my notes this time. Please pardon my sloppy writing... (Sweats)

I pray to see you all at the end of volume two.

CHRONO. N